



岩井恭平  
Kyohai Iwai



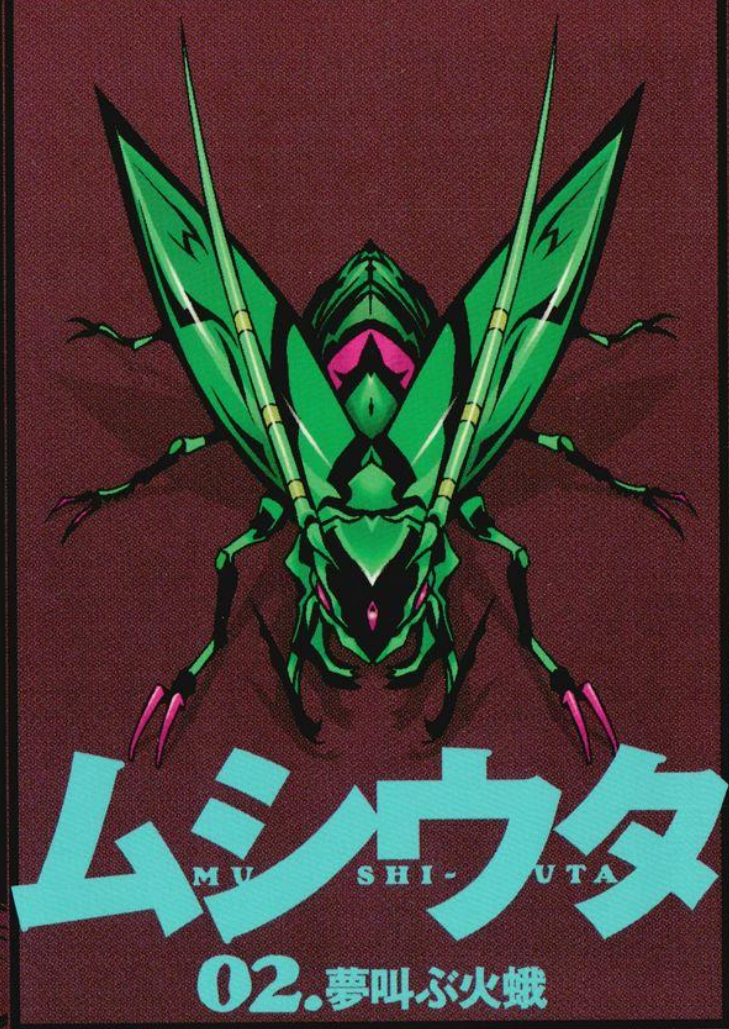
ON: 夢叫ぶ火蛾

# ムッシュウタ

MU SHI-UTA

角川スニーカー文庫





岩井恭平



*In the end, I'm the only one that's not a Mushitsuki.....*

*If that's how it is, I too should just ----*

*Senri*

*Azu*

*Daisuke*





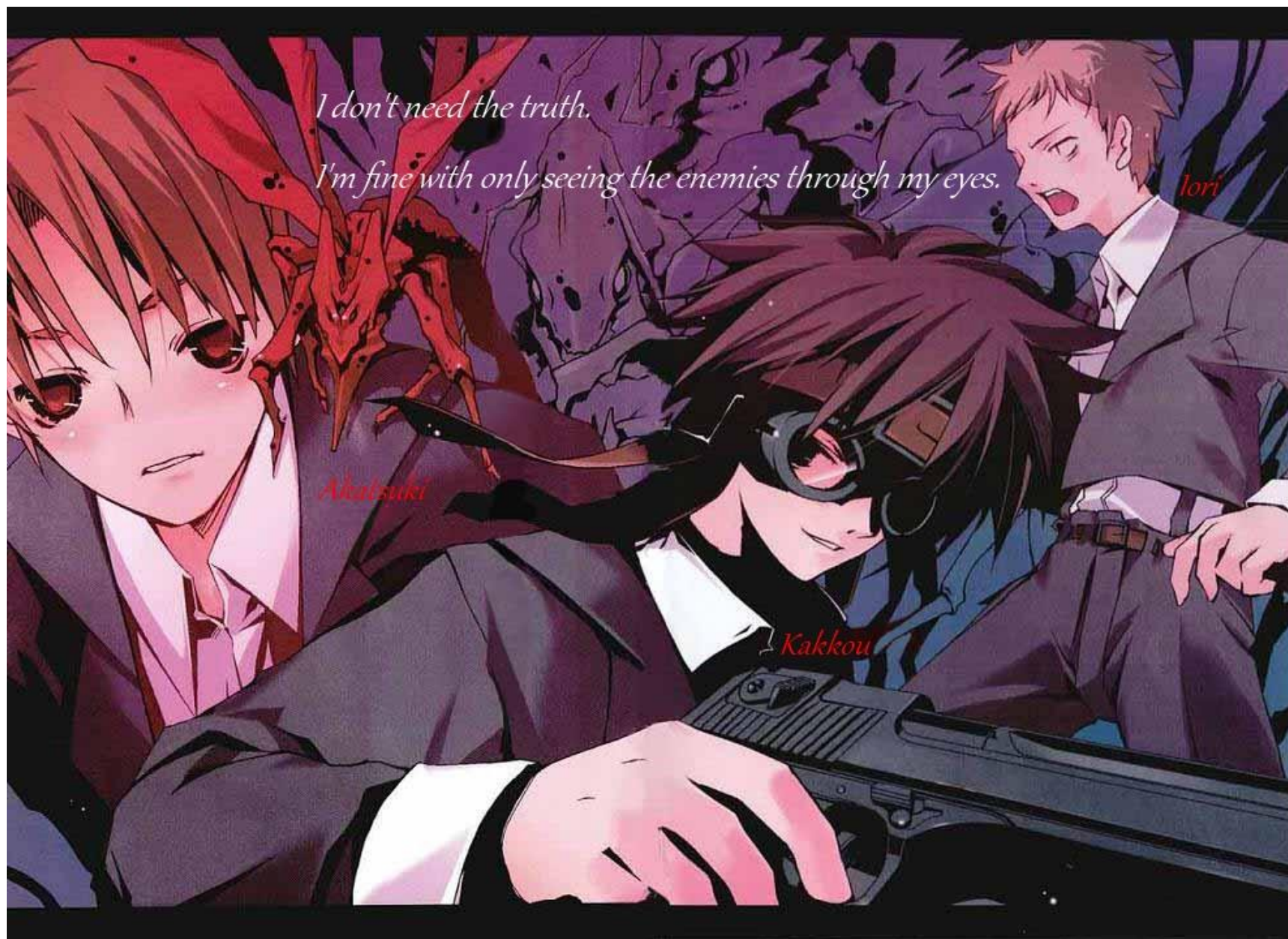
*I don't need the truth.*

*I'm fine with only seeing the enemies through my eyes.*

*Iori*

*Akatsuki*

*Kakkou*





*Shinpu*

*I can hear a voice.*

*It said the reason why everyone  
disappeared was because of my existence.*

*It said it was me who...*

*erased...*

*everyone...*

*Senri*



*Even though it's a dream so small, that it might be mocked by others...*

*It's still my most precious dream.*





## 立花利菜

Rina Tachibana

大助の同級生。虫憑きのレジスタンス組織“むしばね”のリーダー“レイディー・バード”として“かっこう”と激しく戦い、死亡。



Story of  
**MUSHI  
UTA  
OL.**

「ムシウタ」これまでのストーリー

人の夢を喰う代わり、宿主に超常の力を与える“虫”が出現して10年。薬屋大助は通学電車で少女・詩歌と出会い、強く惹かれあう。だが詩歌は“虫憑き”を収容する国の極秘施設からの逃亡者だった。特別環境保全事務局は最高のエージェントにして最強の虫憑き“かっこう”に出動を命じ、容赦なく詩歌を追いつめようとする——！

## ハルキヨ

Harukiyo



特環、むしばねに続く第三勢力ともいえるべきグループを率いる少年。その実力は未知数だが、恐るべき戦闘能力を秘めているとされる。

## Characters of **MUSHI UTA**

キャラクター紹介



## 薬屋大助

Daisuke Kusuriya

何一つ特徴的なところのない普通の少年だが、特別環境保全事務局＝特環が擁する最強の虫憑き“かっこう”としての顔をもつ。



## 杏本詩歌

Shiika Anmoto



その特異な能力から“ふゆほたる”と名づけられた虫憑き。大助と出会い、強く惹かれあう。現在、特環の隔離施設に収容されている。

## 土師圭吾

Keigo Haji



切れ者として名高い特環の東中央支部長。妹が虫憑きであることから、虫を激しく憎んでいる。“むしばね”との戦闘中に負傷、現在昏睡中。



フクローグ 0.00 The others——9

1.00 The others——13

1.01 大助 Part 1

1.02 大助 Part 2

1.03 大助 Part 3

1.04 柊子 Part 1

1.05 大助 Part 4

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2.01 The others

4.01 The others

2.02 The others

4.02 The others

2.03 大助 Part 6

4.03 大助 Part 9

2.04 柊子 Part 2

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4.05 The others

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4.08 大助 Part 10

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6.00 柊子 The last——355

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5.00 千緑 The last——334

5.01 大助 The last



# ムシウタ

02. 夢叫ぶ火蛾

岩井恭平



角川文庫 I3I3I

## *Ce Light Novel Translation*

Note to Readers:

There were some mistakes on the translation of the cities' names in the previous volume

Below are the corrections:

Tatsuoka City => Ouka City

Ietsu City => Hashiba City

Houzawa Town => Housawa Town

Terms in case you forgot:

SEPB's classification:

Kashu: Title given to Mushitsuki that had outstanding ability in combat. Almost all of the currently existing Mushitsuki belong to this category.

Ishu: Title given to Mushitsuki that had some sort of special ability.

Hishu: Title given to Mushitsuki that had all sort of unique condition. This title is one of the rarest, not that many was given such title in the whole series. So far Shiika is the only one that had obtained this title. (Because she's the only one that awakened from Fallen status.)

(Mushi) Types:

Minion Type: Also known as separation type whereas the Mushi would be separated from the host themselves. This is the most populated type of all, near 80% (estimated) of Mushitsuki population had this type.

Special Type: Every Mushi of this type have no physical shape of itself, but might form one when it activates its ability which would mostly likely be control of certain medium within its territory. IE: Fire, electricity, gravity, etc.

Fusion Type: The rarest type of all. The Mushi of this type would fuse itself with Mushitsuki's body + weapon to activate its ability and further grant super human strength, speed, and durability to its host.

Enjoy ~

-Wing

P.S: There're also some fan-made drawings included in this PDF by Artist G.H. =)



0.00

## Prologue

Her cheek... was feeling the touch of the gentle wind...

And after it breezed by her cheeks lightly, she understood that the so-called 'Wind', in fact, doesn't have a "Form" of its own.

The sound of wind passing by, flowed into her ears. In addition, there was also the noise of \*Sha~Sha~\* blending along with it.

The source that was producing the noise was an object in front of her that had a huge "Form". She walked closer and tried to touch it... After feeling a rough sensation she realized, surprisingly, that even her hands had a "Form" in itself.

*I'm still fine* --- A small sense of comfort filled her heart.

If she became "Formless" just like the wind, then what would happen? Without a "Form", wouldn't she just disappear without leaving a trace, without leaving any evidence of herself behind? ...

The sound of \*Sha~Sha\*, which she had heard several times already, continued on. It was supposed to be the noise created when the wind blew by the object called [Tree]. In other words, the "Form" that she was touching right now—it should be a [Tree] right?

Behind the [Tree], there was an even bigger "Form" of an object.

And she already knew what the object was ---

This was the second time she had seen this {Scene} already. The last time she had seen it, was when she was in elementary school.

That was the only {Scene} that she knew, the only "Form" that she understood clearly.

The giant bell began to ring loudly, vibrating against her abdomen.

"Come ... Come inside the (Church)... ..."

A voice sounded from an unknown distant; a hoarse voice that seemed to be coming from an elder.

Seduced by the sound, she walked closer to the giant "Form" of the object that was behind the [Tree].

That's right, that "Form" is a building known as the (Church).

A place where one goes to praise God and spread the teachings of God; as well as a paradise of salvation for those lost ones --- Many explanations and theories related to (Church) --- began to surface within her mind.

After entering the (Church), she discovered there were many other little objects that also had "Form". But they were very quiet, wouldn't make any noise unlike the [Tree], and also wouldn't change their "Form". (The reason why object changes its "Form", was it caused by the "Movement"?)

The {Scene} was exactly the same as before.

And within her mind, she understood exactly what was going to happen next.

With the sound of a "Splash" --- a "Form" in the front suddenly began to change. It shaped a new fringed "Form", and started merging with other "Forms". The combination of those "Forms", began to shape into another new "Form", rising endlessly upward.

"... Burn..."

The voice began to resound from the unknown distant.

She couldn't do anything else, besides gaze at the {Scene} in front of her.

"Burn..... Burn..... Set everything around thee ablaze....."

As the "Forms" disappeared in an instant, a sense of fear began to invade her body.

If an object lost its "Form", it meant that the object would no longer be touchable, which would be a very sad and very scary thing.

Finally... the {Scene} had also completely disappeared.

Suddenly she recalled the [Tree] from before, and turned her head back...

--- !

A soundless voice slipped out from her throat.

The [Tree] was also devoured by some unknown "Form", and slowly began to lose its original "Form".

"Thy flame..... Thy flame shall lure other people's dreams..... and incinerate everything... even now 'tis the same..."

She stretched her timid hands closer to the [Tree], yet she couldn't touch it, because the [Tree] had already vanished in an instant.....

Everything else disappeared around her.



“.....Thy flame shall consume everything thou holdst precious, and ye shall continue to live such a fashion... within a world that canst not touch anything..... in solitude.....”

Many important things ---

She had many important treasures; they would speak to her with gentle voices, and surround her with warm feelings.

"Thy flame..... thy flame shall rend -all- into ashes....."

In a world where even wind would disappear, tears began to fall from the corner of her eyes.

She cried a silent scream.

An unusually calm part of her mind began to ponder, as the {Scene} began to vanish...

The next time when she awakened, she would definitely hear this wail again on top of her bed ---

1.00

## The Others

After the teenage boy disembarked the train, the train door began to close up along with the sound of air being released.

Afterwards the train left the platform, leaving behind vibrations resulting from three train carriages colliding together.

The passengers that disembarked at the same station as the teenage boy, numbered less than a handful.

Even though there were only four new automatic wickets in the front; it was more than enough to handle the amount of passengers of this station.

The teenage boy readjusted the Boston backpack on his shoulder, and walked through the ticket gate.

Since it was a weekday at noon, aside from the staff of the station, most of the people that walked throughout of the station were either elderly or suit wearing white-collar office workers. The appearance of a sixteen-year old boy around this time period should be something very strange, yet no one bothered to turn around to gaze at the teenage boy.

The coat wearing teenage boy didn't have any features that were eye-catching. With a slightly childish face that didn't reveal any emotions; he walked straight towards the exit with a steady pace, without the slightest confusion. With a normal coat that was befitting of his medium sized body, his pitch black hair was blown by the air-conditioner of the train station.

Looking closely at him, the Band-Aid on his face would probably his only unique trait... And if he was to remove the coat that he was wearing, one could see that his unrecovered body was still wrapped in bandages, yet it was impossible to tell that just by looking at his appearance.

An out of season Kakkou Mushi, that had the special trait of a pair of long antennae, slowly landed onto the shoulder of the teenage boy.

The teenage boy --- Kururiya Daisuke, passed through a billboard that read "Housawa station south exit" and stepped outside.

The cold wind of January was stinging his cheeks.

The scene that unfurled before him, was exactly the same last time Daisuke was here; it didn't change in the slightest. The area was still as sparsely populated as before, there weren't any tall buildings around, the color of the public facilities tended towards gray— and even the number of cars passing by on the road were pitiful to look at.

Housawa Town ---



A border town that required at least three hours of travel via train from Ouka City, where Daisuke originally lived. Yet, Daisuke didn't feel new here, because he had already lived for a period of time in this town before. At that time, he had never thought that he would come back here once again.

He subconsciously bit his lips as he caused the backpack strap he was gripping, to produce a sound of being tightly squeezed

--- Suddenly, his field of vision darkened.

"Guess who am I?"

Upon hearing the voice coming from behind, a tense nervousness enveloped Daisuke. Not only was he shocked by the unexpected move of opponent, he was also stunned at himself for not noticing the incoming presence.

It was a hoarse voice that Daisuke heard before, a voice that he was hearing every single day a few years ago; even now, he would at least hear it once every month. He relaxed his shoulders, and replied with a smile:

"Senri?"

Behind him came the sound of giggling.

Daisuke suddenly recalled, even though the voice was familiar, the teenage girl shouldn't be able to cover his eyes — or rather it was impossible for her to do so.

Daisuke turned his head around, it was a girl that he had never seen before. The girl's pink lips and the cross necklace on her chest were very distinctive, and it seemed like her age was similar to Daisuke's.

"Big success! Yay -----!"

The girl laughed while slowly moving away, revealing another girl standing behind her.

"Haven't seen you in this town for a long time!"

The teenage girl's swaying long hair was, reflected by the rays of the winter sun, sparkling blue aura. The innocent smile she exposed, was making the corner of her eye seem drooped. The high-necked sweater, thick trousers, and the knit cap which had a hairy ball hanging down, all looked very suitable on her. The slender cane in her hand and her figure were exactly the same from one month ago when he last seen her.

Next to the cane holding teenage girl, stood two teenage boys and the short-haired girl he had just seen. Those three were people that Daisuke had never seen before.

Being the representative of the other three, the cane holding teenage girl reached her hand outwards to Daisuke.

"Welcome back, Dai-kun."

Daisuke immediately smiled back.

The teenage girl quietly gazed at Daisuke's chest, her eyes, most likely weren't able to reflect Daisuke's smile... However, it seemed like she was able to sense Daisuke's smile. She --- this teenage girl named Haji Senri, was always able to sense the change of emotion of others keenly.

The green Kakkou Mushi that was resting on Daisuke's shoulder, began to generate crunching sounds with its wings. Looking closer at it, one would be able to find red stains on the wings of Mushi. As the Kakkou Mushi's movement became dull, Daisuke could feel something within his heart was missing...

"I'm back."

Revealing a shy smile, Daisuke gently shook Senri's hand.

While feeling the warmth coming from the teenage girl's palm, he began to recall the causes and consequences that made him return to Housawa Town.....



Daisuke Part 1

During the daytime, the general hospital would always get unbearably noisy due to the large number of hospital staff and patients.

After passing through the entrance, Daisuke walked straight to the elevator without even looking at the counter. The reason being that he was hospitalized here just a few days ago; so he had already familiarized himself with the environment.

His clothing was very simple; it was only a hooded jacket layered over his blazer. Since this morning was the opening ceremony of the third semester at Ouka East High School where Daisuke studied at, he had to come here directly while still in uniform; he didn't even get a chance to eat his lunch yet.

While walking past the reception room, he unknowingly stopped.

The TV that hung on the wall of the reception room was broadcasting the news, with the large heading reading: "The mysterious (Mushi) has appeared once again?!"

Behind the heading, a group of people could be seen debating; huddled around a bunch of ugly monster models that looked like insects.

"Hey, did you know about the incident at the Ouka City coast park? I heard that (Mushi) really did appear ----"

"Yea, my friend once said he had seen those Mushitsuki with his own eyes... but for some reason he suddenly refused to say anything about it afterwards... Perhaps, he was blackmailed by the Special Environmental something organization ----"

Daisuke heard the whispered chatter from the nurses next to him.

He then gazed silently at the TV.

Right now, there were currently some unknown existences rioting throughout Japan.

(Mushi).

They were the mysterious creatures that manifested themselves onto humans and devoured their dreams in order to grow. Even though their sizes and traits varied, due to their appearance being very similar to insects, the general public referred to them as the (Mushi). In addition, the humans that were infested by the (Mushi), were known as the Mushitsuki. Although the government never publicly acknowledged their existence, the fear and discrimination of both (Mushi) and Mushitsuki was already deeply rooted into the general public's heart.

And Daisuke knew it very well, the creatures known as (Mushi) really did exist.

The Special Environmental Preservation Bureau – Also known as SEPB, was an organization that would secretly capture those that were infested by (Mushi), and further isolate them from society. And the vast majority members of the SEPB worked in a variety of different fields throughout society, in order to mask their true identities.

Recently, there had been news regarding the organization throughout the media, however, the details of the organization had not been made known to the public yet. Perhaps it was because the media still hadn't grasped the true identity of the SEPB, or maybe the organization was controlling the media and using its authority in places Daisuke didn't know.

Daisuke took off his coat before leaving the reception room, and then walked into an elevator across the hallway.

After reaching the third floor, he noticed that someone was standing at the end of the corridor of the other side. Even though he could only see the back of the figure, Daisuke could still tell that the figure was a long haired, suit-wearing, and slender-bodied woman. The woman was holding a pile of documents in her hand while standing there dazedly.

“Touko-san.”

Daisuke's sudden greeting surprised the woman, causing her to tremble her shoulders.

“D-Daisuke-san ---!”

By the time she turned her head around, the woman's face was already filled with tears. Without saying anything, she charged straight at Daisuke and dove into his arms with the piles of documents she was holding.

“Wah! W-Wait, Touko-san! Stop that! Why so suddenly... ---!”

“W-What...What should I do?! It seemed like the Central Headquarters wants me to take over Haji-senpai's position and become the deputy director of the East Central Division! ----“

The woman gazed tearfully at the blushing Daisuke.

Aside from the fact that the hair on the back of her head was sticking up due to a bad sleeping pattern, as well as the fact that she wasn't wearing any make-up, and the situation in which she clung desperately on the sixteen year old Daisuke like a child, etc... This woman was indeed a beauty. However, her potential feminine traits were overwhelmed by the negative traits she possessed.





Gorōmaru Touko --- As far as Daisuke knew, she had just graduated from a national university last year, and is currently twenty-three years old. She worked as a government official at the new Internal Affairs of Ministry, and also as a member of the SEPB that was labeled on the news as the “A mysterious organization that was filled with unknown color”. The East Central Division that she just mentioned was one branch of the Special Environmental Preservation Bureau.

“Touko-san is going to become the deputy director?”

Even though Daisuke felt puzzled, it seemed like Touko was even more puzzled than him on many levels.

"I don't know what to do anymore..."

"Well, let's go over there and talk."

Daisuke avoided the pathway of the elevator and walked straight to the end of the corridor with Touko.

Gazing at Daisuke, who walked silently, Touko tilted her head and asked confusedly:

"Umm... Daisuke-san... How come you're not surprised?... Someone like me is going to take over Haji-senpai's position?"

"Well, I knew Haji had recommended you before, that's why I'm not surprised."

"Ehh...?"

The light of the emergency exit sign illuminated the path they were walking on as they came to a stop.

Daisuke released his hand, and turned around.

"Before the battle at the Hashiba City, I had already heard that he recommended you."

Touko suddenly darkened her expression.

Kusuriya Daisuke is a Mushitsuki ---

As well as a member of the SEPB. Under the ruling of the SEPB, Mushitsuki that were captured would be trained and further managed as tools to capture other Mushitsuki. Carrying the alias of (Kakkou), Daisuke was known as the strongest Mushitsuki in the SEPB.

The SEPB would also categorize the Mushitsuki based on their characteristics, and further assign them respective rankings. The Mushitsuki that had outstanding ability in combat would be classified as “Kashu”; those that had some sort of special ability would be classified as “Ishu”: and those that had all sorts of unique condition would be classified as “Hishu”. Then those Mushitsuki would be ranked from number one to ten based on their effectiveness, while other that were not qualified into ranking would just be classified as "No-Rank".

Daisuke was registered as a Kashu level one Mushitsuki.

"Touko-san, have you seen Haji yet?"

"Not yet... Uhm..."

"..."

Daisuke bit his lips lightly.

This was what happened one week ago ---

The SEPB had a full-scale war against the (Mushibane), a resistance organization that was composed of unregistered Mushitsuki. And the fuse of the war was a fifteen years old Mushitsuki girl, coded (Fuyuhotaru).

There were only two fates that awaited Mushitsuki ---

Either they would die after their dream was fully devoured by the (Mushi); or if the (Mushi) was eliminated before that, the host would lose every emotion they had and become "Fallen".

However, (Fuyuhotaru) was able to awaken from the stage of Fallen. Aside from the fact that it was something that was never heard of before, (Fuyuhotaru) had become the only clue of restoring oneself to ordinary humans from Mushitsuki stage, hence a war was triggered. And because of the importance and the danger (Fuyuhotaru) processed, the SEPB ranked her as a Hishu level one.

Another teenage girl coded (Ladybird), the leader of the resistance organization, was also a Kashu level one Mushitsuki that joined the incident. During the incident, (Kakkou) fought (Ladybird) on the behalf of the SEPB. And the result of these two strong Mushitsuki's battle was a complete destruction of an entire city.

That's right, the city was "completely destroyed". Just because the two of them fought with all they had, the function of the city that served as an experimental facility to the SEPB was completely paralyzed. Among the five existing level one ranked Mushitsuki, three of them had joined this war. Moreover, even the leader of the third force, Harukiyo, whom was ranked as Ishu level one, had appeared before Daisuke once.

Even though (Kakkou) barely won the war, he had successfully captured (Fuyuhotaru).

However during the incident, Haji Keigo, the director of the East Central Division that (Kakkou) belonged to, was seriously injured. After losing consciousness, he still hasn't awakened yet.

"I still find it hard to believe... That Haji-senpai had become like that... .. He took care of me a lot, yet I'm saying these heartless words..."

Touko suddenly revealed a good-for-nothing smile. Even though the smile was something that Daisuke used to seeing, it seemed a little more disconsolately than usual.

Technically speaking, Touko was not Haji's Kohai. Since she worked at the New Internal Affairs of Ministry, while Haji belonged to the Bureau of Legislative Affairs. The reason that she addressed Haji as senpai was because they have known each other before; prior to joining SEPB. Yet the most useful thing she had done for Haji in the East Central Division was just filling for drivers. [TL Note: I suppose you all should know Kohai, if not, it meant the opposite of Senpai. Somewhere along the line of lower classman]

"Um... Daisuke-san, about the recommendation, what did you mean by that? Did you know what was going on.....?"

Touko asked. It seemed like she wanted to change the subject, which Daisuke sighed in response:

"I don't know the reason. But Haji had said it once before, if anything happened to him, the Central Headquarters would probably follow his first recommendation and let Touko-san take over."

"W-Why?"

Daisuke hesitated a bit before saying:

"Haji had always deceived the Central Headquarters in the past, which was making him stand out. I suppose, after Haji...they would probably send an obedient person to take over the leading position of East Central Division, in other words, they were attempting to take over the East Central Division through the...puppet they sent."

Touko stood dumbfounded right on the spot.

--- She is really useless.

Daisuke suddenly recalled Haji's words.

--- But she can only stay useless for now.

The words that the young man had said with his usual contemptuous smile, even now, Daisuke still couldn't understand the meaning of it. However, according to what Daisuke experienced, Touko really didn't seem like a talented person.

Touko tilted her head slightly, scratching her head as she said wryly:

"Aha ... That's more like it ... You're right ... With my ability, how can I ever take over Haji-senpai's position? The Headquarters probably knew it very well right?"

"Well, 'That's the main point'."

"... Eh?"

"That guy had said so before."

"What does that mean?"



"Who knows? I couldn't even figure out what he was thinking nine out of ten times."

Daisuke shifted his gaze away from Touko, while scratching his head as he finished his words. He leaned against the wall before continuing to ask:

"... .. How is she now? Do you know?"

"Uh... Huh? What did you just say?"

"I'm mean Shiika... .. (Fuyuhotaru), how's she doing and where is she right now?..."

Touko looked at Daisuke surprised.

At the war one week ago, Daisuke had personally captured (Fuyuhotaru), whose real name was Anmoto Shiika. And it seemed like Daisuke was holding some special feelings for Shiika.

Even though it was unavoidable, the Shiika who had been kept prisoner, how was she doing now? During the past week, Daisuke's mind was filled with thoughts about her.

Touko also knew about the special relationship between Daisuke and Shiika, since Haji had told her purposely before. Suddenly, Touko realized something, and began to look through the files in front of her chest.

"W-Well, regarding that case ---"

She took a transparent folder out of the files, and read the contents on it.

"Uh..... On the day (Fuyuhotaru) was captured, she was sent to the related facilities within Ouka City. Right now, she should be undergoing health diagnosis, physical and psychological testing over there ... If there is no problem, she will probably be transferred to other cities of East Central Division and start living a normal life as an ordinary person under the accompaniment of watchers; in order to observe any change in her ... .. As to which city they send her to, it is still under debate. In addition, this case is classified as a confidential issue and can only be viewed by those that are ranked director or higher... Ehh?! Ah! This seems to be a top secret case ... what should I do...?"

"Is that so..."

As if a big rock was lifted away from his heart, Daisuke breathed a sigh of relief.

Knowing that she was all okay was enough for him. Shiika is very strong... Until the day Daisuke comes to pick her up, she would probably never give in no matter what, right?

"Umm.. Uhhh, Daisuke-san? ... .."

At Touko, who gazed worriedly at him, Daisuke replied with a smile:

"Touko-san, don't worry. I will protect the East Central Division. As long as I'm here, the Headquarters and many others— like the remnants of (Mushibane) and Harukiyo, won't act so rashly.

"Daisuke-san..."

After hearing the words from the teenage boy that was younger than her by seven years, Touko expressed an eased smile.

Yet suddenly her expression changed, as if she had recalled something, Touko's expression darkened.

"Touko-san, what's wrong?"

"Um... Umm, Daisuke-san... I have something... to ... Uhh..."

Touko was stuttering her words as she raised one of her hands to adjust her tilting glasses, but the action caused the files she was holding in front of her to fall on the spot.

Touko and Daisuke immediately picked up the files scattered on the ground.

"S-Sorry!"

"Touko-san, it'd be best if you can learn to be calmer... Huh?"

"Eh?"

Daisuke caught a glimpse of a document that fell on the ground, and began to widen his eyes.

On the document file, a photo shot of a teenage girl was attached to it.

The teenage girl's age was similar to Daisuke's, around fifteen to sixteen years old. Maybe because of the reflection of the light, her long hair was reflecting a bit of dark blue color. In addition, her slightly drooping eyes made her look like a very modest and lovely girl.

".....!"

Although Touko tried to cover up the photo immediately, her arm was seized by Daisuke's hand.

"Why... ---?"

Daisuke shifted his gaze at Touko and knew immediately she was frightened by his sudden change of attitude.

"Why do you have Senri's photo?"

Touko trembled with fear, yet Daisuke ignored this and continued shouting:

"Isn't this the registration notice of Mushitsuki? Why is Senri... The fact that she is a Mushitsuki, only me and Haji are supposed to know! Why is this here?....."

"D-Daisuke-san! Stop, it hurts... it really hurts...!"

"Touko, give me your explanation now!"

"Daisuke-san, please... please calm down...! Even though you aren't wearing the goggles, why did you become (Kakkou) all of sudden?"

Even though Touko tried desperately to appease Daisuke, it didn't seem to work at all. Confusion and anger had deprived Daisuke of his consciousness, causing him to grip onto Touko's arm harder as he glared at her harshly at close range.

A nurse that probably heard the shouting, arrived at the scene, but Touko replied with a wry smile at her while saying: "It's... It's fine... Please don't mind."

She then turned to Daisuke, and began explaining after a deep breath:

"I... I only heard the instruction right before I came to the hospital, so I'm still not quite sure about all the details... But it seems like the SEPB had already noticed the fact that Haji Senri --- Which is Haji senpai's younger sister, was a Mushitsuki."

Daisuke's heart skipped a beat as if it had just endured a violent punch, while he gradually loosened his hand that was clutching on to Touko's arm.

"At the Housawa Town where she is convalescing, the watchers from the West Southwest Division had already infiltrated and are currently monitoring her. Aside from Haji-senpai, the director of the West Southwest Division that was in charge of the Housawa Town was the other person that knew about the matter... .. However since Haji-senpai became like this... The director of the West Southwest Division reported the situation to the Central Headquarters. And since the Headquarters felt that the fact Senri's (Mushi) had the same characteristics as (The Original Three) --- the ability to devour other's dream was way too dangerous; they immediately decided to deploy the highest ranked member into Housawa Town to capture Haji Senri."

Even though Touko's explanation was plain and straightforward, Daisuke muttered dazedly in respond:

"The highest... ranked member...?"

"Kashu level one ranked member (Kakkou)... Daisuke-san, that's you."

Daisuke was speechless this time. Touko frowned as she continued on:

"(Kakkou) will temporarily leave his position at the East Central Division to infiltrate the educational institution where Senri attends and monitor her until further instruction. In addition, the most important matter of this mission is to prohibit any combat activity that's out of his respective division's area. If he disregards this rule and perform any battle, he will immediately be executed with level one penalty by other members: Above is the decision made by the Central Headquarters."

Touko was getting more and more quiet as she continued:



"As for the level one penalty for (Kakkou)... He will be dismissed by the Special Environmental Preservation Bureau and further be considered as a target of capture. At the same time, the truth will also be reported to his non-blood related family relatives... .."

Daisuke released his hand from Touko at that instant.

Touko bit her lips, and lowered her head.

Silence enveloped both of them as they faced directly at each other.

"Ha ---"

Daisuke's laughter broke the silence.

"In other words, I'm kicked out of the East Central Division, right...?"

"In principle, you're still a part of the East Central Division... That's why they are prohibiting you from fighting at other regions ---"

"Haji is still unconscious you know?! (MinMin) and (Kabuto) aren't here as well! And even (Namie) is still missing! If I'm not here, who's gonna protect the East Central Division?... Who's gonna protect Shiika.....?"

The enraged Daisuke immediately grabbed Touko by her collar.

"Stop joking around! (Mushibane) and Harukiyo both are still coveting for Shiika! Yet they want to transfer me to the West Southwest Division at time like this... While prohibiting me from battle? Isn't this an obvious excuse for them to take over the East Central Division? What did you do in the end? Just watch them make such foolish decisions and accept it without saying a word?

"I..."

It seemed like Touko wasn't able to hold on anymore, she counter-grabbed onto Daisuke's arm and argued back, while tearing lightly:

"I only happened to learn about it today as well! Whether it was this major decision made by the Central Headquarters, or Haji-senpai's condition ... I wasn't told until today... I still can't believe that senpai had become like this..."

"Even so, shouldn't you at least protest against it? What the hell did Haji taught you?"

"He only taught me physics and chemistry during the time when he was my home-tutor; and after joining SEPB, he made me serve as his driver! Do you think any of those would help?!"

"Ahaha, that's more like it. It's because of your uselessness, that you're able to take over Haji's position after all!"

“Aren’t you the same?! It was because of you being so strong, that they purposely delegated you! Oh... Excuse me, you’re now the strongest Mushitsuki (Kakkou)-sama right?!”

Both of them were grabbing each other by the collar as they glared at each other.

“I.....”

After letting go of Touko, Daisuke fiercely punched the wall.

“In the end, what the hell am I protecting.....!”

“...”

Touko bit her lips lightly.

Even though they were all parts of the SEPB, the Central Headquarters and the East Central Division had been on bad terms with one another for long time already.

The Central Headquarters was always dissatisfied with them because of Haji; who always liked to use tough methods and was not afraid of making enemies. Yet in past, due to Haji’s intelligence and Daisuke’s strength, the Central Headquarters had kept their hands off the East Central Division.

After the Hashiba City’s battle, Daisuke was determined to protect Shiika. While Haji risked his life as a member of the SEPB, for the sake of his younger sister that was a Mushitsuki.

However, the result had become something like this.

The Central Headquarters’ intentions were way too obvious. Despite Daisuke being the strongest Mushitsuki they had, the Central Headquarter still saw him as dangerous. During the Hashiba City incident, not only did he defeat the matured Ladybug, he also captured (Fuyuhotaru). Even though it was a great success from the mission’s point of view, his strength was alarming to the Central Headquarters. So taking the advantage of Haji’s absence in authority, they had deliberately delegated him to the border. It was indeed ironic to the point where he began to wonder... what exactly was he fighting for.

“... I’ll go to Housawa Town tomorrow.”

Even though the decision was unacceptable, it was really meaningless to complain about it in front of Touko. What he could do right now was to finish the mission as soon as possible and come back to Ouka City. Yet despite Daisuke accepted the mission verbally, his clenched fists were constantly trembling from remorse.

Just when Daisuke was intending to turn around, Touko called out to him:

“Ah, D-Daisuke-san, please wait. There is some news about the Housawa Town.”

“...?”

“Recently, there had been news regarding the remnants of the (Mushibane) rioting about in Housawa Town, and in addition... there has also been witnesses of (Church) at the outskirts of the town.”

Daisuke turned his head around.

“(Church)..... you said?”

Touko nodded her head in response. Daisuke then laughed with a distorted expression while saying:

“In addition to the remnants of (Mushibane), even one of (The Original Three) had come... And they are prohibiting me from fighting at such place, what the hell is the Central Headquarters thinking?”

“Daisuke-san...”

“Touko-san, please prepare the necessary details of the mission, I’ll come and pick it up tomorrow morning.”

Daisuke said that as he turned around. Yet Touko immediately raised her head and asked, while panically collecting the files that were scattered on the floor.

“Eh? What? You... want it by tomorrow morning??”

“You have other tasks?”

“Ah, not that... It’s not a big deal... it was just... that someone invited me to a match up party today...”

“...”

“Well..... I have also stepped into the society you know... one of my colleagues, Kyu-chan, said I should learn how to get along with guys more, so she purposely arranged this match up party for me, Ahahah!”

“... I forgot to bring my gun.”

“Just kidding! That was just a joke! Aha, ahahah...”

Touko threw up her hands to surrender, while trying to fudge it over with a wry smile.

“I’m also the same as Haji...”

Daisuke sighed as he gazed straight at Touko.

"Please don't trust the Central Headquarters... they think that the task of capturing the unregistered Mushitsuki is far more important than defeating (The Original Three). I even heard that within the Headquarters' isolation facilities, they were having inhuman experiments with Mushitsuki... Their true goal was Mushitsuki themselves, as long as they could discover the truth behind the existence of these mysterious creatures (Mushi); they wouldn't care about (The Original Three) at all."

Touko's expression took a dramatic change.

Even within the SEPB, there were only few that knew the truth Daisuke was talking about. And Haji was the first one to realize the Central Headquarters' plan. It wouldn't be strange at all to say that he was targeted by them because of it.

"Ah... Ahaha... How's that possible.... That's so off ---"

"Haji was the only one that had been keeping track of (The Original Three); He didn't care about the fact that he was being hated to the bone by Mushitsuki. Everything must be done for the sake of not increasing Mushitsuki like his sister; he hated the fact of Mushitsuki was being born more than anyone else."

"..... Haji-senpai."

Touko muttered weakly. Daisuke then continued saying:

"We still need the East Central Division now. We don't care about other people's hatred, or what we have to give up along the way to fight. However, if we were to lose the East Central Division, we won't be able to continue fighting. And if we're not able to move forward, we will really become monsters that only know how plunder the dreams of others..."

Daisuke gazed straight into Touko's eyes, before continuing:

"Before I return... or before Haji returns, please do your best and protect Shiika --- (Fuyuhotaru), if the East Central Division was to lose (Fuyuhotaru) now, everything will be over... So no matter what, the dreams the Mushitsuki of the East Central Division and ours all depends on you now, Touko-san."

The words that Daisuke just spoke, was really what he had prayed for within.

The (Fuyuhotaru) that had awakened from the Fallen status, would probably be eyed on by many other organizations from now on right? This was why she was the trump card. (Fuyuhotaru), a Hishu level one Mushitsuki, even if everyone was coveting for her, they probably wouldn't dare to attack the East Central Division now after knowing the powerfulness behind her ability.

In addition, Daisuke had his own planning as well.

Shiika was still waiting for him. Yet the one who she was waiting for was not (Kakkou), but a non-Mushitsuki ordinary teenage boy --- Kusuriya Daisuke.

However, Daisuke shouldn't appear before Shiika yet. He felt that he must redeem his sin— the fact that he had turned Shiika into a Fallen four years ago— before he could properly face Shiika again.

"I will definitely defeat (The Original Three). That's why Touko-san, please protect the East Central Division until I come back."

Facing Daisuke's plea, Touko expressed a not-so-reliable smile in response:

"Daisuke-san, please be careful."



After smiling, Daisuke turned and walked away.

“Dai-kun, it feels like your hand has become much warmer and gentler than before.”

“Eh?”

Housawa Town --- A country side town with a population of around thirty thousand residents presently, and declining gradually over the years— mainly due to the fact that the young residents were moving out one by one.

And since most of the large buildings were concentrated near the station, if one was to leave the station and walk along the national highway for a bit, there would be only a few sporadic entertainment facilities waiting ahead of them.

After the two of them walked for almost ten minutes from the station; fresh air began to fill their lungs as the tip of a mountain that was crowned in snow could be seen in a distance.

Daisuke was holding hands with Haji Senri as they walked at the outskirts of the town. The surrounding scenery was divided into two, either residential area or farm land, by the path they were walking on. And since the time was just a bit past noon, they could barely see anyone on the road.

Senri smiled as she spoke while maintaining her gaze on Daisuke's chest.

Daisuke's heart felt a slightly throbbing pain.

Senri had the most pure and frank smile out of everyone. Whenever he saw her smiling face, he would feel himself immersed in a familiar sense of comfort. Yet, it was as if Senri could see through the guilt that piled up in Daisuke's heart, with her pair of eyes that could never gaze directly at Daisuke's eyes.

“I'm not gentle at all...”

Daisuke exposed a wry smile, and re-gripped Senri's hand. Her hand was much more gentler and warmer than his. Even though they were small, Daisuke could feel his hand being enveloped by her warmth.

Senri giggled lightly.

“Ara, Dai-kun, are you being shy?”

“... Ah, Red light. Stop for a second.”

“Mm...”

The two of them stopped walking in front of the red light. Daisuke who was carrying his Boston backpack, and Senri who was holding her cane with one hand, were holding each other's hands as they exhaled a blow of white mist.

A brief silence then fell between them.

Senri was congenitally disabled.

Daisuke met Senri when they were both in sixth grade in elementary school. And Daisuke at that time had just been adopted by Haji, and shortly after, Haji introduced Senri to him. Daisuke felt slightly troubled at first, but after he realized that, besides being blind with a frail body, Senri was actually a very normal girl, he then felt much comfortable being with her. Later however, the fact that Senri was extremely sensitive to smells and changes in others feeling, often surprised him.

Daisuke used to live here at Housawa Town with Senri, back when he was in Junior High. Ever since then, he always treated the always thoughtful and smiling Senri as his own younger sister.

Just then, a truck drove by in front of them.

Senri suddenly coughed a few times; and upon seeing this, Daisuke pulled Senri's hand.

"Dai-kun?"

"It might be a bit longer, but we should take the field path."

"..."

"Scared?"

"Nope, not at all!"

Senri exposed a rather happy smile.

"Ah, I can hear the signal of the green light. Let's go!"

Senri then began to jog across the crosswalk with a fast pace, while holding Daisuke's hand; which clearly showed her trust in him.

"Wait, there's crack in front, be careful."

"Hehe, you're just like Miki-san and Iori-kun — always so worried over me. They would always get angry at me whenever I start running."

After crossing the crack with her cane, Senri puffed her cheek slightly and complained.

The Miki that Senri just mentioned was the woman that's currently taking care of Senri now, while Iori supposed to be one of Senri's friends that he just met before.

After getting into a field through the gap of the roadside fence, the two of them resumed their walking on a road that was covered with sands.

The countryside road during winter time was always very quiet. Their footsteps sounded lightly before blending into the quiet surroundings, and disappeared into the fresh air. Raising her hand which was carrying the cane, Senri stretched her body outward.

"Ah --- It feels so good! I haven't walked here for a long time. I think I stopped coming here after Dai-kun left for Ouka City."

"Happy is good, but be careful not to fall in."

"Eh --- What should I do? If I fall in, would you come and save me?"

"I won't save those that deliberately fall in!"

"Ah --- So mean! I take back what I said; you're not gentle at all!"

Even though Senri was puffing her cheeks as if she was angry, she immediately returned to her smiling self afterward. Daisuke also smiled as he helped Senri to adjust her direction.

At the end of the field, a big residential area could be seen; the apartment that Senri was living in was among them.

"Oh, by the way Dai-kun. Is Onii-chan okay?"

--- Thump

His heart skipped a beat.

In order to conceal his shaken emotions, Daisuke pretended to be calm while answering:

"The usual stuffs... He has to take care of a lot of troublesome cases, very busy."

"He hasn't contacted me lately, so I'm a bit worried... I guess the work of a government official is really hard."

After seeing Senri expose a wry smile, Daisuke eased his tensions.

Since Senri was extraordinarily sensitive to others' change of emotion, it was very difficult to deceive her. Moreover, the fact that he was deceiving her itself was unbearable to him.

Senri believed that her older brother, Haji, was actually just an ordinary government official of the Bureau of Legislative Affairs. She didn't know anything about the SEP or its secretive content. And of course, she didn't know about Daisuke's secret as well. Senri could probably never imagine that Daisuke is a Mushitsuki, and the fact that Haji is the one in charge of him as well.

"Does he eat on time? Even though Onii-chan is smart, he doesn't know how to take care of himself."

"Mhm --- That guy does have that sort tendency."

"Dai-kun, you're also the same!"

"Eh?"

"When you're sad, you always think about something else. And even if your hands are cold, you tend to ignore it. I always felt that... you seem to hate yourself."

"....."

Senri held up the expressionless and quiet Daisuke's hand closer to herself. Before overlapping it with her other hand that was holding the cane, and then she held tightly onto Daisuke's hand.

"Even now, your hands are feeling colder than usual."

"... It's probably because the wind is colder now."

"Then when I'm the only one by your side, let me warm you up ... .."

From the smiling Senri's hand, came waves and waves of warmth; the same warmth that had melted away his confusion and mixture of emotions many times before.

While immersing himself into the sleeping-like sense of comfort, he thought to himself:

---- *Senri, I'm sorry, I ...*

He suddenly recalled the promise made between him and Haji Keigo.

Before losing his consciousness, Haji had entrusted his will onto Daisuke. Yet, Daisuke was unable to say his will now... a drilling pain pierced through his heart painfully.

"Ah... sorry for stopping all of sudden. Let's go."

Senri released one of her hands, and took a step forward. Yet on her face that turned away, a slight faint blush could be seen.

"I'm happy that I can go to school with Dai-kun again! It must be hard for you that your uncle is constantly switching place right? How long can you stay here for this time?"

Senri shyly finished up her words. And because Daisuke hadn't told her about his true reason for coming to Housawa Town yet, it seemed like the story has become something like his uncle was moving here due to his job. Consequently, Daisuke had to transfer here before him; and until they can find a place to stay, Daisuke would have to stay over at Senri's Apartment for the time being.

"Mmm --- Probably not going to stay for so long."

"Really? I'm actually very happy at school right now; it'd be fun if you can stay for a bit longer."



"Is it because of those three that I met at the station before?"

Daisuke recalled the three teens that came along with Senri to the station. After a brief self-introduction to Daisuke, they left immediately after. It seemed today was their last day of winter recess, and they were there just to see Senri off.

"Yup!"

Senri's expression suddenly brightened.

"They are all very nice and kind; tomorrow I will properly introduce them to you. Iori-kun and Azu-chan are in the same class as me. Dai-kun should also get along with them!"

It seemed like their relationship was quite good, Senri's expression was indeed very happy.

Because the SEP had already finished Daisuke's transfer procedures a few days ago, and tentatively placed him into Senri's class, he could go to school tomorrow right away.

Daisuke then suddenly recalled the same age teens that he met before.

The guy named Iori was probably the guy who had sharp eyes, and a messy spiky hair. His full name should be Endou Iori.

"Iori-kun he umm... is actually very handsome guy! Even though he acts quite cold toward others, he is still very famous among the girls. And not to mention he had already become the ace of the soccer team despite him being only a freshman. But he worries too much over me, every time he sees me walking on the street alone; he will immediately lose his temper."

"Oh, that guy is actually quite simple eh?!"

Right after Daisuke finished, Senri tilted her head in puzzlement and said: "He is simple?"

Upon seeing Senri's expression, Daisuke could not help but to smile wryly as he immediately understood that boy named Iori would probably have to work a bit harder, if he wished for Senri to find out about his feelings.

"Azu-chan is Iori-kun's childhood friend. I heard they've been together ever since kindergarten. Even though they appeared to quarrel all day long, their relationship is actually quite good. Azu chan's family believes in Christianity, hence she's a devoted Christian."

Azu was probably the girl who blindfolded Daisuke earlier on; her full name should be Sunakozaka Azu. Daisuke then remembered that she was wearing a cross necklace on her neck.

"Akatsuki-kun, umm what to say: He feels like a sunset."

"Sunset?"

Daisuke then recalled the teen that was standing next to Iori, a rather peaceful looking boy. His name was Ogata Akatsuki; a somewhat unique name.

"Mhm, He is very kind, but gives off a little lonely feeling sometimes. Maybe it's because he has a lukewarm personality? Ah, isn't sunset gold in color? So I think Akatsuki-kun must also be gold in color as well."

That was the first time Daisuke heard that sunset was gold. Did Senri heard from someone else? Or was it her own unique perception feelings?

"If I was to describe Iori-kun in color: it should be the rather cold yet precious water blue color. And since Azu-chan is always busy in and out, gets angry quite often, she should be the flaming red color."

"What about me?"

"Dai-kun... Hmm...?"

Senri sank into deep thinking, and became speechless.

Just then, Daisuke suddenly felt a surge of dizziness, as if he had fallen into a bottomless hole.

"----!"

His knees weakened.

*--- What... What is going on?!*

After Daisuke had come back to his sense, he was already kneeling on the sand road, a strong sense of powerlessness then enveloped him. He completely didn't understand what had happened to him.

"Dai-kun?"

Because of Daisuke's sudden behavior, Senri suspiciously turned her head around.

"!"

On the ground ahead, a small insect flew about and landed in front.

That was Daisuke's (Mushi), a green colored Kakkou Mushi.

The tips of the Kakkou Mushi's wings were covered in burning flames, and those flames were slowly eroding its wings.

The powerlessness that enveloped Daisuke --- felt very similar to the moment when his dream was devoured by the (Mushi).

*How come this is happening...?!*

Daisuke looked up to Senri as she asked with a puzzled expression:

"Dai...Dai-kun, what happened?"

She then stretched her hand outward to look for Daisuke, and grabbed tightly onto him when she touched his arm.

Senri is a Mushitsuki.

Yet she herself didn't know anything about it. Probably because she was still young at that time, or might have thought of it was just a dream, she had already forgotten everything about her becoming a Mushitsuki.

In addition, the reason why she was not aware of the fact that she is a Mushitsuki, was probably due to herself being blind and the unique trait of her (Mushi) that was infesting her.

Senri's (Mushi) would not devour its host's dream, but the dreams of others instead. Besides the existence of (The Original Three) that could give birth to Mushitsuki, Such a (Mushi) type had never appeared before in the past

However, even though Senri's (Mushi) would devour the dream of others, it didn't give birth to Mushitsuki because of it. Not to mention her (Mushi) was very picky with its food, it would only devour the dreams of those that it likes. So far the target that it "eyed" on had only been Senri's older brother, Haji Keigo, and Daisuke. Yet ---

*..... It had never devoured so much in one go in the past before! Why is it?!*

Daisuke's expression tensed as he whispered to himself in his mind.

He could feel a sense of emptiness, as if his chest was hollowed out. Even after the eroding flames disappeared from the Kakkou Mushi, the feeling still persisted.

"... I'm fine, just tripped over."

Daisuke stood up as he gently released Senri's hand that was clutching tightly onto him.

"Really... are you really sure? Are you not feeling well somewhere?"

"I'm just fine! Here!"

When he finished, he immediately went in front of Senri and bent down.

"Ahya!"

Daisuke lifted Senri onto his back in one go. After feeling her light weight upon him, He could not help but to think that, even the Boston backpack on his back was heavier than her.

"D-Dai-kun! What are you doing?! Put me down!"

"Senri, you look much worse off than me! Is it because you have walked too much?"

"Dai-kun, you still have luggage to carry...! I'm fine, h-hurry up and put me down now!"

"Hold on tight!"

"Eh? Ahya!"

Daisuke then started running across the field while carrying Senri. Senri's screaming could be heard behind him, echoing up and down.

After entering the residential areas, Daisuke finally let Senri down.

He wheezed as Senri next to him began to press her hand against her chest to stabilize her breathing.

"That... That sure was breathtaking after all ... Let me take a rest."

"I can't believe it! Dai-kun, why are you forcing yourself?!"

Daisuke immediately replied with weak laugh in order to ease Senri's anger. If he were to take a short rest now, the energy that he had just used and his spiritual energy that was devoured, should be able to recover. If he didn't do so, the perceptive Senri would definitely notice his abnormal condition...

The orange sunset was hanging at the end of the residential area.

Daisuke would always think of some people in the evening.

Shiika, and ... Tachibana Rina.

They were the Mushitsuki that had the same dream as him. And even now, Shiika is still trying her best to overcome her (Mushi), While Rina --- she passed away in Daisuke's arms.

Just by thinking about them, Daisuke could feel the emptiness within his heart gradually being filled.

"Dai-kun, I'm sorry..."

Daisuke's heart raced a bit.

Turning around, he noticed that Senri was biting her lips lightly. He originally thought that she was apologizing because of her (Mushi), yet it didn't seem to be the case. It looked like she was apologizing for the fact she had a frail body, and it made Daisuke worried.

"That's not the right thing to say, is it?"

Daisuke adjusted his breathing rhythm, while holding Senri's hand and said very cheerfully:

"Shouldn't it be 'Thanks'?"

Senri then revealed a surprised look, before reverting back to her usual self while smiling:

"Mhm, Thanks..."

"Yup, that's more like it. Let's go."

After walking for a few minutes, they arrived at the building that Senri was living at. They then took an elevator to the fourth floor where Senri's apartment was at and pressed the doorbell, the door immediately opened.

"Welcome back."

The one who greeted them was a smiling, tall, and slender female. She had a slender body figure and beautiful appearance; even her hand that clutched onto the door handle was quite slim.

Her name is Hasegawa Miki, the woman that had been taking care of Senri up until now. After Miki saw Daisuke, she invited him in with a smile.

"Daisuke-kun, welcome back to you as well!"

"I'm back."

Revealing a shy smile, Daisuke walked into the apartment.

The interior of the apartment was quite spacious. And perhaps the heater was turned on; Daisuke could feel a warm current flowing throughout the living room as he took off his coat.

Through the balcony that was outside of the window, the outdoor scenery could be seen. And since there weren't any tall buildings like theirs around the area, one could see the view of the whole residential district of Housawa Town in one glance.

After Senri finished saying, "I'm going to get changed", she left the living room. And since she was capable of handling daily life at home all by herself, all Daisuke and Miki did was watched her off.

"Give me your coat! I'll hang it up for you."

"Ah, thank you."

After passing his coat to Miki, Daisuke sat on the sofa.

"It has been almost three years since last time you lived with us right? Yet I felt like it just happened a short while ago, time sure flies... By the way, does saying stuff like that make me sound old?"

"Well, I felt like it happened long time ago, after all, I only lived here for a month."

"Daisuke-kun must have gone through quite a lot right? Well here at Housawa Town... no matter how many years it has been, things will never change. Oh, there would probably be less and less residents at most."

"Mhm, this place sure hasn't changed at all."

Daisuke sat on the sofa, and looked at the scenery outside the window.



Even after three year time period, Housawa Town's scenery still hadn't changed a bit. Opposite of Ouka City that was in fast development, this town was known for its lush yet tranquil environment, which was exactly the reason why Senri is convalescing here right now.

"Daisuke-kun, you seem to have changed."

After Miki hung the coat on the hanger, she said that as she walked into the kitchen. She then poured the drinks from the refrigerator into cups before returning back. While taking the cup of drink from her, Daisuke tilted his head as he answered:

"Really? Senri just said that as well."

"It felt like you're manlier than last time I saw you. Ah, could it be that you gotten yourself a girlfriend?!"

"\*Poof\* .....!"

Upon seeing the chocking Daisuke, Miki raised the corner of her mouth to reveal a grin as she laughed:

"Ahaha, I see! Ohh, so Daisuke-kun is the type that will do it when he needs to eh?"

"I... I haven't done anything! And... she's not my girlfriend..."

"Huh? Not a girlfriend? But you still did what you have to do right? Arara, Daisuke-kun, that's bad ---"

"I said I haven't done anything yet!!"

Facing Daisuke with blushing red cheeks, Miki giggled maliciously with a smile. Just then, Daisuke suddenly recalled that Miki was the type that likes to tease people whenever possible.

Even if he was to argue any further, he would definitely get led by Miki for sure. Putting on a poker face, Daisuke began to quiet down as he slowly recalled Anmoto Shiika's shallow shy smile.

*Shiika ----*

*How is she doing now?* Every time when he recalled her: a warm fuzzy feeling could be feel expanding within his heart.

"Daisuke-kun, why are you giggling to yourself like that?"

"Eh?"

"Ah, I guess it can't be helped after all, you're already that sort of age anyway. But even so, don't you dare lay your fingers on Senri-chan! Keigo-san will butcher the shit outa you for sure!"

"I... I won't do anything of that sort okay?!"

Facing Daisuke's protest, Miki threw a "Who knows?" untrusting gaze at him.

"I'm gonna go get change as well."

It'd definitely be his disadvantage if they were to argue any further. Daisuke carried the Boston backpack that carried his luggage and stood up unhappily.

"Daisuke-kun."

Miki's call made him turned his head around.

"I had already heard from you on the phone, Keigo-san's situation....."

Daisuke saw Miki expose a rather delicate expression, but he kept it to himself.

Miki was originally a magazine model before becoming a home-stay fashion designer. Even though she was just an ordinary citizen that had no relationship with the SEPB at all, she knew about Haji and Daisuke's work. And despite Haji declaring their relationship as "friends", a friend normally wouldn't ask to take care of other's sister without asking for anything in return, right? Daisuke thought that it was quite suspicious.

"I know, I haven't said anything yet. But is Senri's condition really.....?"

"She's still pretending that everything is alright... but according to the result of the previous diagnosis, she has weakened quite a lot. So please, don't say anything or do anything that would provoke her right now, keep things as it is for the time being... okay?"

Daisuke bit his lips as he left the living room.

---- "I have words that I want you to.....pass on to my loved one"

Daisuke suddenly recalled Haji's words that he said before he lost consciousness. Even though he had made a promise to Haji, he was unable to even fulfill that promise now.

After standing in front of a room, feeling depressed, Daisuke opened the door.

"...Umm?"

The one, who sounded that voice, wasn't Daisuke.

The first thing that reflected into his view, was her snow white skin.

Facing Daisuke, the teenage girl was about to put on her causal clothes after putting her former clothing onto the bed next to her.

Daisuke's thinking ability short-circuited right on the spot.

"W-Who is it? Don't tell me..."



A voice then suddenly sounded behind Daisuke, which almost scared the living soul out of him.

"Sorry, sorry. Because you're too slow I came to check you out but I forgot to knock on the door. "

When he turned around, he could see Miki was standing behind him, squinting at him with her eyes.

Senri then eased her expression as she pulled some clothes in front of her chest.

"Miki-san... Please don't scare me like that."

"I'm about to make dinner now, let me know right away if you want to eat something okay?"

After seeing Senri nodding her head, Miki closed the door.

"Daisuke-kun, didn't I told you already? ... Avoid any action that would provoke her?"

Daisuke didn't dare to say anything to answer Miki who was whispering at his ear. She then continued nonchalantly in whisper: "Oh, I forgot to mention, the room that you were using three years ago, Senri is using it now."

*This woman must have done it on purpose!* ---- Daisuke cursed loudly within his heart.

"This incident, I will hide it from Keigo-san. But remember! You owe me a big favor from now on!"

Miki snickered as Daisuke covered his blushing face with one hand and heaved a sigh, while shaking his head.

## Daisuke Part 3

Moira high school, a private university-affiliated high school that was located not far from Housawa Town. Even though it was a new school that was established along with its university counterpart few years ago, due to its casual environment and ethos of free style being widely acclaimed, the number of students enrolling were actually quite high. In addition, its trendily designed uniforms and high graduation rates were the top reasons as to why it was so popular.

Aside from those, the school was also famous for its mechanism that allowed the students to govern themselves and focus more on developing students' creativity. Even though the effectiveness of the actual implementation was still unknown, it was one of the main reasons that Haji resided Senri in Housawa Town.

The whole school had about seven hundred students, compared to other high schools within the Housawa Town, it was quite a large number. In addition, most of the students from Moira High school came from the other cities.

During the morning homeroom, the teacher introduced Daisuke to the whole class.

"I'm Kusuriya Daisuke, nice to meet you all."

After his short-introduction, large amount curious gazes were projected on Daisuke, yet he didn't mind much because he had already gotten used to it.

At the last row of the classroom, near the door, Senri was waving at him quietly; her hair was tied into two twin tails above her ears. Daisuke had entered the same class as Senri, first year C class.

Sitting next to Senri, the teenage girl named Sunakozaka Azu was also smiling at Daisuke. While at the corner near the window, the teenage boy named Endou Iori was staring at Daisuke with his sharp glare.

Under the instruction of the teacher, Daisuke walked to his seat, which was the last one against the window; the seat right behind Iori.

After Daisuke seated, the morning homeroom soon continued. Right after the Teacher was finished with roll calling, he announced the safety measures of an incoming field-trip that would take place in two weeks; which were very much the same in every other schools.

Just then, Iori turned his head around to check on Daisuke.

"We met yesterday right? Please take care of me, Endou-kun."

Daisuke greeted very friendly, yet Iori responded with silence before turning his head around.



Like a bucket of cold water being poured against a wall, Daisuke's kindness was demolished just like that. Just then, he felt someone was looking at him from the side; He then turned around and saw Azu was holding her hands together into a posture as if she was saying "Sorry".

"Hey, I'm Kanari Yoichi. Nice to meet you! Kusuriya-kun!"

The teenage boy who sat next to him kindly greeted him, with a relieved feeling, Daisuke replied with:

"Nice to meet you".

Although Kanari seemed like a very friendly and honorable student, Daisuke noticed that he had a tattoo sticker that was quite popular recently around his neck area. It was not very obvious, but does the school really allow such thing?

"Do you know Endou-kun?"

Yoichi asked quietly, which Daisuke nodded in response.

"Me and Senri --- Haji-san already knew each other before this. It was because of her that I knew about Endou-kun."

"Oh..."

Yoichi then revealed a kind smile.

"If you came across anything that you don't understand, don't hesitate to ask me! This school has quite a lot of weird rules after all."

"Thank you."

Yoichi's friendly attitude relieved Daisuke. Even though it was for the sake of accomplishing mission, Daisuke was still having a hard time getting use to a new school. Having a friendly classmate in the classroom would actually help him to calm down a lot.

After the teacher finished talking, he left the classroom right away.

And then, as if he was waiting for that moment to come, Iori suddenly stood up and grabbed Daisuke's arm forcefully.

"Come with me."

"Eh?"

Even though Daisuke looked puzzled, he still stood up. Iori then clutched onto his arm and dragged him to the classroom door.

"W-Wait, Iori! Where are you going?"

“Eh... Iori-kun? What happened?”

The teenage girl named Azu and Senri who heard Azu’s voice, both turned their head at them.

“This guy is not feeling so well, I’m taking him to the infirmary.”

“Huh?”

Ignoring Daisuke’s confusion, Iori dragged him into the corridor after pushing away Azu who was in his way.

On the corridor was left empty after the morning homeroom ended, another teenage boy appeared from another classroom.

Since Daisuke met him at the train station yesterday, he had already remembered his appearance. The teen’s name was Ogata Akatsuki. The smiling face that he showed yesterday was stiffening now due to nervousness.

Iori used his chin to point at the stairway like a signal, which Akatsuki nodded his head in response. After they met in front of the stairway, they went up the stairs, dragging Daisuke along with them.

“W-Wait a second! Isn’t the class starting soon? .....”

Facing Daisuke’s complaints, Iori and Akatsuki responded with silence. Daisuke tried to shake away Iori’s hand, but he was surprisingly strong, completely different to his skinny body figure.

The three of them climbed the stairway with a pace of two stairs per step until they finally arrived at the door to the rooftop.

Iori then used his other hand to dig out a key from his pocket and threw it at Akatsuki. After catching the key, Akatsuki swiftly stabbed the key into the hole and opened the door. Their teamwork was flawlessly as if they had practice it over and over for many times already.

The glare of the sun and cold morning’s breeze began to pour in endlessly.

Since the school was just constructed not so long ago, the rooftop was still clean as if it was brand new; there were even orderly arranged flower gardens around, as well as few benches set up around them.

“Woah!”

After arriving at the roof, Iori forcefully threw Daisuke in front.

“What... Why are you guys taking me here? If we don’t go back, the class will start ---”

Right before Daisuke could finish with his sentence; the bell sound of next class rang mercilessly, caused Daisuke to sigh while scratching his head.

“Ahhh, Damn it..... It is my first day of transferring here...”

The first iron rule of being a watcher of the SEPB was to avoid doing things that would make them stand out. Daisuke had never imagined that on his first day of school, he was forced to skip the first class of the day. Even though he had been transferring all over the place in the past due to his missions, but something like this was actually the first time it happened.

Meanwhile, the two teenage boys were still staring at him silently, Iori with his sharp gazes, and Akatsuki with his nervous and stiff expression.

Just when Daisuke was about to blame them, Iori suddenly spoke something that was expected:

“You’re the watcher from the Special Environmental Preservation Bureau right?”

Daisuke was dumbfounded.

Iori then reached out his hand.

“...!”

On top of the teenage boy’s index finger, a small insect appeared out of nowhere.

The insect looked very similar to an ant, yet it was different than the average ant. With a cyan colored body that was divided into head, thorax, and abdomen, while its head that had antennae on top seemed rather big.

Akatsuki then blew a very soft whistle.

A tan colored insect crawled onto his shoulder from his back. Its tail was divided into two parts, which looked very similar to a mayfly.

*These guys... are Mushitsuki?!*

Daisuke reflectively reached his hand behind his back, but when he realized that he didn’t bring his handgun, he suddenly recalled his mission...

Prohibited to perform any combat behaviors within Housawa Town.

“Judging from your reaction, I can’t be wrong.”

Akatsuki muttered.

*Why are there two Mushitsuki by Senri’s side? And how come they knew about the existence of SEPB? This is not a joking matter anymore...*

Daisuke’s expression suddenly became serious.

“I definitely won’t hand Senri... to some unknown organization like Special Environmental Preservation Bureau...”

While whispering softly, a look of obvious enmity surfaced on Iori's face.

"We will protect Senri!"

In front of the motionless Daisuke, Iori's (Mushi) gradually became bigger.

1.04

## Touko Part 1

Goromaru Touko was walking on a white path, while carrying a stack of files.

The white attired people that passed by her were staring at her with untrusting gazes.

“Hello everyone, good work.”

Even though Touko bowed every time when she saw someone, no one responded to her. The majority just stared at her silently, while there were some that were surprised by her actions.

After walking for a few minutes, Touko came to a dead end.

In front of a wall that had a crack-like mark, two people wearing black coats were standing still. They were both wearing huge goggles that covered their entire faces.

“I’m the deputy branch-director of the East Central Divison, Goromaru Touko. I would like to see her, can I?”

Facing one of the goggled figures under the distance of breath, a red dot could be seen appearing on the lens of his goggle, while the faint sound of an electronic device could be heard.

“Retinal comparison completed. Deputy branch-director Goromaru, please come in.”

The wall before Touko then split into two.

A white tunnel, very similar to before, appeared within the interior of the wall.

“T-Thank you”

Just then, one of the goggled figures called out to Touko, which caused her to stop.

“Deputy branch- director.”

“Ah... Yes?”

“Branch-director... How’s branch-director Haji doing now?”

“(Mizuchi)!”

The first goggled figure shouted angrily. Judging from their voices, it seemed like the person who performed the retinal scan for Touko was a male, and the one who asked the question after was a female. Both of their voice sounded very young.

“Um... That...”

“Deputy branch-director, you don’t need to answer. Any information related to branch-director Haji is top secret, it’s not something that low ranked members like us should know of. If we obtained the information without permission, there will only be punishment awaiting us. So please don’t mind.”

“I-Is that so...”

The two goggled figures became silent, and since Touko didn’t know what to say, she continued to move forward.

While walking forward, she turned her head around to check on them. The two people were whispering to each other quietly, it seemed like they were arguing.

After passing through the tunnel, another gate could be seen with black-coated figures guarding the front.

And after going through with the same matching procedure as before, she crossed the second gate and continued to march forward until she finally arrived at a floor where a large number of people in white clothing were walking about. She randomly picked a person and asked him about the location of the room that she was searching for. Even though the other party was displaying an alert attitude towards her, he still pointed out the direction for her.

After following the directions, Touko soon arrived at a spacious room that was filled with screens and electronic devices; there were a few white attired people staring at the other end of a glass wall.

At the other side of the glass wall, several large-scale machines could be seen along with a few more figures dressed in white.

Just then, one of the machines that seemed like a CT scanner made a noise in front of Touko, while slowly sending out an object that appeared to be a bed board.

The figure that was released from CT scanner began to slowly lift her body up on the bed board.

“So that child is the Hishu level one ranked Mushitsuki..... (Fuyuhotaru)?”

Touko held her breath after she muttered.

The teenage girl that was dressed in white clothing turned and gazed at them. She was a petite girl that looked very good with short hair, and just by looking at her appearance, she seemed like a girl that could be seen everywhere.

However, she is a very important key figure on the research on why (Mushi) existed and their purpose. And the reason was because she was the only one that had managed to successfully reawaken from being a fallen, after losing the (Mushi) that was infesting her.

They originally thought that after becoming a fallen, Mushitsuki would lose every emotion they possessed, and could never reacquire their feelings ever again. Yet, Shiika had shattered this concept – her existence has proven that the fallen state wasn’t the absolute end for Mushitsuki.



“Excuse me... Can I talk to her for a bit?”

While asking that, Touko reached her hand towards the handle of the door that lead to the inside.

“W-Wait a minute! Who are you?!”

After noticing Touko’s presence, the white attired figures changed their expressions.

“Ah, my apologies, I’m Goromaru Touko, I was newly assigned as the deputy branch-director of the East Central Division.”

“Deputy branch-director..... Wait a second! I will immediately deploy guard members here...”

“Ah, it’s okay. She looks much better-behaved than I expected.”

After saying that, she turned the handle. Along with the sound of air being released, a muttered voice could be heard behind:

“A-Are you kidding me? That kid is a Hishu level one ---”

The door automatically opened, its heavy metal began to move back as if it was being pushed and revealed a pathway.

Looking out from within the room, she noticed that the original position of the glass wall was replaced by a seemingly normal wall. A few white attired people and the short-haired girl turned their heads and gazed at her through the crowdedly arranged machines.

“I want to talk to her, can I?”

Although the people dressed in white gave surprised looks, they still listened to her words and walked away. Meanwhile, the girl sitting on the bed board was gazing at Touko curiously.

“Ah, Hello. I’m Goromaru Touko, the newly assigned East Central Division’s deputy branch-director of the Special Environmental Preservation Bureau.”

Touko revealed a friendly smile, while holding out her hand.

Yet the teenage girl looked at her hand in surprise before whispering softly:

“But I’m a... Mushitsuki”

After she said that, Touko then suddenly recalled:

“Ah... That’s right! Could you please don’t call out your (Mushi) here? I just can’t get use to them. The first time is aw one, I even passed out! Embarrassing isn’t it?”



“ ”  
...

The teenage girl then looked at both Touko's face and her hand for a bit.

“Ah! My hair is spiking up right? Uh, if you can, please ignore it!”

Looking at Touko’s flustered attitude, the teenage girl could not help but to giggle weakly. And since Touko didn’t know why the teenage girl was giggling, she grumbled slightly unhappy before the teenage girl said:

“Hello... I’m Anmnoto Shiika...”

The teenage girl’s smiling face seemed to be quite happy.

The two of them then shook each other’s hand.

Touko later spent around ten minutes asking Shiika some simple questions.

It was just a normal survey asking her if she had any dissatisfaction with her current status quo, or if she needed anything with her daily life, and so on.

Shiika then expressed that she didn't have any dissatisfaction with her treatment right now. In fact, she said that her treatment was much better than she expected, which made her felt at ease.

Touko thought to herself:

*It can't be helped that others treated her well... Even though it is difficult to tell from the appearance alone, she is actually a level one ranked Mushitsuki just like (Kakkou) and (Ladybird) who passed away; someone that could easily destroy a city. Of course the others would treat her generously with caution just so it wouldn't provoke her.*

"Mmm..."

After going through the files, Touko heaved a sigh. It seems like all the questions that were on the file had been answered.

After Touko talked with Shiika in person, she felt that Shiika was actually no different from most adolescent girls.

Touko gazed at the teenage girl in front of her.

"...?"

Shiika tilted her head perplexedly.

--- What exactly are Mushitsuki?

This sudden thought surfaced in Touko's mind.

Shiika is very well-behaved, and also cute to a point where one could not help but want to pat her head. If a girl like her who looked no different than any other normal teenage girl, one day suddenly obtained a power that could influence the fate of a country, what would she feel? If such thing was to happen to

Touko, she would probably not be able to endure it, right? From inexplicably obtained power, to being inexplicably hunted down by unknown people, while her dream was inexplicably devoured by the (Mushi) ---

The Shiika in the past must have endured a lot of indescribable fears than Touko could imagine, right? And she must also bear a lot of pain as well right?

However, Shiika faced it with a smile...

How could such a small girl able to smile like that even after experiencing all of that?

"Don't you feel... weary?"

Touko could not help but to ask, and her words caused Shiika to tremble her shoulder slightly.

"No matter how I look, you seem like a normal girl to me..... Yet in reality you have went through becoming a Mushitsuki... and then you were hunted down by many people because of it..... and now you're imprisoned here....."

Shiika's expression darkened as she looked down on the floor. Yet, she immediately raised her head up afterwards.

"I have a dream."

The teenage girl said with a weak smile. Even though it was sort of bashful smile, it contained a strong will that Touko had never felt before.

"Even though it's a dream so small... that it might be mocked by others... It's still my most precious dream."

Shiika's words made Touko finally understand something.

*Haji-senpai ---*

The young man that is currently sleeping at someplace unknown, what was he trying to protect in the past? Touko finally understood a bit of his intentions now.

*So these are Mushitsuki ---*

Touko naturally revealed a smile, and very politely bowed while saying:

"Thank you very much. Umm... see you next time!"

"Ah, wait..."

Shiika stopped Touko, who was planning on leaving.

“Uh... asking you this kind of question might seem strange... but I would still like to know, do you know anyone named Kusuriya Daisuke?”

“Umm..... I’m sorry.”

Touko frowned. Shiika still didn’t know that Kusuriya Daisuke’s true identity was (Kakkou) yet. Touko felt that her acting this time was quite worthy of praise.

“Is that so... How about (Kakkou)-kun?”

Touko could not help but smile upon recalling that Daisuke had felt the same way as Shiika.

“Of course, he is a part of the East Central Division just like me.”

“Then... Can I please ask... How’s (Kakkou)-kun doing right now?”

“Mmm --- It’s a very confidential matter... But! Onee-san would be generous and tell you only a bit!”

Touko leaned closer to Shiika, and whispered lightly next to her ear.

“He is still fighting even now.”

--- In order to protect you.

She added that silently within her heart.

“Ah... Is that so...”

Shiika smiled.

“(Kakkou)-kun is also trying his hardest huh...”

After bidding farewell to the teenage girl who lowered her head shyly, Touko left the room.

To the SEPB right now, (Fuyuhotaru) is an indispensable and important figure that is imperative for freeing Mushitsuki from the shackles of the (Mushi).

On one hand, (Mushibane) which had lost its leader (Ladybird), was gradually falling apart. While on the other hand, the third force that was led by Harukiyo had probably claimed Shiika as one of their intended targets. Perhaps they may have already had their eyes set on this facility.

The most important task for the East Central Division right now --- is to secure and protect (Fuyuhotaru) at all cost.

And in order to let Daisuke --- let (Kakkou) return to Ouka City as soon as possible, she must finish her piles of problems that stacked up like mountains.

She walked in a tunnel for a bit before arriving at the spot where two goggled figures were standing guard at. Both of them were staring silently at the pathway in front.

As Touko passed them by; she spoke as if she was talking to herself:

"Branch-director Haji will soon return to work."

However, when the female heard her words, she knitted her brows behind the goggles and asked:

"He... is still alive?"

Touko stopped at that instant.

She then widened her eyes at the female and watched as she turned her head away while biting her lips.

"..."

Touko felt embarrassed of herself for misunderstanding the female's question before, and left the place in a hurry.

That's right, to Mushitsuki in general, the organization known as SEPB was nothing more than an abominable opponent. Why would they worry for someone that forced them to fight? Well on other hand, to Touko who's an ordinary human, those Mushitsuki were merely dreadful monsters.

If we hate each other that much, then why are we still trying to protect each other?... If that's the case, what's her purpose of being here? Wouldn't quitting this job and find a new career be perhaps a wiser choice?

"..... Ahhhhhh!!! Annoying! So damn troublesome!"

Touko complained out loud while waiting for the elevator.

Many people that walking about, turned around to gaze at her in surprise. Touko could only smile wryly while apologizing: "Ah... uh, Umm... Sorry, it's nothing... Ahaha..."

"It's pointless to think about those issues now anyway... I'm an idiot after all."

After stepping into the elevator, she began to mutter to herself, as the self-disgust arise from within.

"It wouldn't help to think about this any further anyway..... I guess I should just go get a cup of coffee first after getting upstairs."

Touko leaned herself against the elevator wall and continued her rambling.

(Fuyuhotaru) was accommodated at the 30th sub-floor of this underground facility. The floor indicator of the elevator was gradually moving toward ground level.

"They want me to do the same thing as Haji-senpai, that's just simply impossible..."

Touko then heaved a sigh as she shrugged her shoulders.

Thinking back at it, the first time when she saw that man named Haji Keigo was probably six years ago.

Haji Keigo was still a college student at that time, and the reason Touko knew about him was because he was her private tutor during high school. When they first met, his attitude and style was much more gentle and easy going than it was now.

However, their relationship still wasn't particularly close because of it. And since Touko's grades didn't improve at all, Keigo was fired after teaching for around two months. (After that, Touko tried two more private tutors, but her grades had gotten even worse than the time when Keigo was teaching.)

Before the entrance exam season, Touko applied for the same university as Keigo. But it was not only because she recalled that one of her tutors had studied at this university; she had a sudden whim in her decision-making as well. But even so, she busted her ass studying for it.

After successfully being admitted into the university, Touko met Keigo again. Even though he had already graduated, he still came back from time to time for club activities and research papers; there were also Kohai looking for advice from him occasionally.

After they met several times, they started chatting about things in the past.

--- Of course I remember, it was the first time I encountered someone that was so hard to teach.

Keigo said with a wry smile, while Touko lowered her head in embarrassment.

Prior to the period of choosing a career, Touko thought of Keigo once again. After hearing that he worked for government agencies, Touko felt like she should give it a try; and so she busted her ass off studying for exams once again.

And shortly after she successfully enrolled in the new Internal Affairs of Ministry, Keigo came looking for her.

Even though they were both government officials, Touko had never thought that they would have the opportunity to meet each other again. The fact that Keigo came looking for her had made her really surprised, and not to mention when that he invited her to join an unknown organization to help him out, she was really stunned. When Touko asked him about the reason why, Keigo laughed with his usual shallow smile and said:

--- Well if I have to, I would rather work with someone that I know, so that way I wouldn't have to worry too much right?

She thought that whoever could use that kind of reasoning to recruit someone would definitely be considered weird. But then again, someone like herself, who accepted without giving it a second thought, was probably the same right?

After that, Touko realized that Haji Keigo was actually a really talented person. No matter where he went, he would be feared and avoided by others. And just the fact alone, that he had few partners, should clearly show his superior ability.

Touko could only follow closely behind Keigo wherever he went. She could not help but wonder that, why would he need someone as useless as her to work for him?

--- You're that type that would try to muddle and live through life right?

Keigo stated mercilessly while laughing.

--- Other than trying to dismiss things with a wry smile, you particularly had no other desire right?

He was right.

Touko had absolutely nothing. She has neither the capability, nor the will required to deny the things that she disliked... and nor did she have a dream of itself...

--- That's what I like about you.

The young man said.

Yet Touko was confused by this.

The man known as Haji Keigo, what was he really planning? And why was he choosing her as his successor?

He even expected Touko to accept his invitation without thinking twice. Well, it was probably because he knew that she was the type that likes to muddle through life.

"Eh...?"

Touko suddenly recalled another matter.

Thinking back on it, there was actually another comment that Keigo had once said to her. However, when she lowered her head trying to remember it, she realized something was wrong.

"Umm? Eh?"

The floor indicator of the elevator had stopped at the 20th sub-floor.

Touko then tried to press the buttons again, but the elevator didn't move at all.

"Oui--- Blackout? But... the fluorescent light is still ---"

Before she could finish with her words, a strong impact suddenly struck against the elevator, causing the files in Touko's arms to scatter all over the place.

"O-Owee! Ahh, I bit... bit my tongue..."



An intense pain caused her to curl up her tongue in her mouth. At the same time, the red warning sign above the floor buttons flashed rapidly.

"[Beep! Warning! Warning! A suspicious figure has infiltrated through the ground floor-vent and is speculated to be still lurking inside the facility. All researchers please immediately head towards the designated shelter around you, while security guards and combatants should immediately search for the suspect within the facility! In addition, the possibility of the suspect being a Mushitsuki, is very high---]"

Touko widened her eyes.

After a short moment of silence, the sound of metal clashing could be heard above the elevator ceiling as the whole elevator began to shake violently, as if it was being struck by some unknown hard object.

"Ah... Again?!"

Touko nervously attempted to stand up, but she immediately fell down due to the violent tremors, which caused her to bite her tongue again.

After the sound of a huge impact, a loud noise of something being crushed resounded from above.

Shifting her gaze to the ceiling, Touko immediately became speechless as her face began to turn pale.

An insect, with limbs that was as huge as human's arms and huge compound eyes, was staring straight at her from above.

Touko covered her mouth and smacked the emergency intercom before shouting:

"In here! There's a (Mushi).....! In the elevator...!"

Another strong impact struck against the elevator as the giant (Mushi) wiggled its mouthpart through the hole on the elevator ceiling.

Just by looking at the alien-like insect, Touko felt like she was going to pass out right on the spot. However, she bit her lips and reached her hand into her inner suit pocket.

"P-Please don't move!"

After pulling out her personal handgun, Touko pointed it at the giant (Mushi).

Just then, (Mushi) stopped moving.

"..... Who are you?"

From somewhere above the elevator ceiling, the perplexed voice of a teenage boy rang through.

"I-I'm the Special Environmental Preservation Bureau, East Central Division's deputy branch-director, Goromaru Touko! If you're a Mushitsuki of the SEPB, please state your codename! If you don't answer --  
\_"

"The East Central Division's..... branch-director?..."

"Report your codename at once... report...!"

"So it was you who killed (Ladybird).....!"

A raging shouts sounded through the hole as the giant black (Mushi) crawled inside the elevator. This (Ladybird) that he mentioned, wasn't she the one who served as the leader of the (Mushibane)?

--- A *(Mushibane)*'s remnant!

Touko pulled the trigger with full force.

However, the bullet didn't fire, because she forgot to pull the safety lock...

Besides the training that she received when she first entered SEPB, this was actually her first time holding a handgun.

"Ah---?"

The (Mushi) jumped down from the ceiling and landed on Touko, causing her to fall to the floor helplessly. It then wiggled its mouthpiece in front her who couldn't breathe from its overwhelming weight.

"Ugh... ..Ugh...!"

The teenage boy that stood on top of the (Mushi) was looking over at Touko, who dropped her handgun.

"Where is (Fuyuhotaru)? She's our comrade! If you don't want to get killed then ---"

"Deputy branch-director Goromaru! Get down!"

A shout suddenly sounded from outside of the elevator.

"I-I'm already down! Wahhh!"

The elevator door exploded the moment when Touko replied.

She originally thought that a truck had charged in, but it was actually a giant Hercules beetle that was even larger than the (Mushi) that was on top of Touko.

The sharp horns on the giant Hercules beetle's head mercilessly pierced through the body of (Mushi) in the elevator.

"Uh...Ahh!"

The teenage boy that was standing on the (Mushi) immediately fell to his knees while holding his chest in pain.

The giant Hercules beetle that pierced the (Mushi) slowly moved out of the elevator, and did a 180 degree turn in the corridor, throwing the (Mushi) and the teenage boy on top of it towards the end of the corridor.

"Finish him!"

Under the instruction of the man that shouted, many goggled figures immediately charged toward the (Mushi) at once.

Touko laid on the ground, gazing dazedly at the upside-down view before her.

The teenage boy's (Mushi) was desperately defending itself from the frenzied attacks of the goggled figures' (Mushi).

"Deputy branch-director, are you okay?"

A figure wearing a black coat and goggles over his face spoke, while reaching out his hand. Touko had some impression of this person.

"Ah--- I-I'm fine..."

After regaining her consciousness, Touko tried to lift herself up with the teenage boy's aid, but immediately squatted back down from exhaustion.

"Aha...Ahaha... my legs feel weak..."

"Should I call the medical squad over?"

"Ah, it's fine... By the way... (Kabuto), aren't you still convalescing?"

The teenage boy named (Kabuto) replied with a calm voice to Touko's question:

"...I was dug out from the hospital under the branch-director assistant's order... It seems I am the strongest member of the East Central Division at the moment... Even though I am just a Kashu level six."

"... Sorry, I was supposed to put in that order..."

"..."

Just then, the (Mushi) that invaded into the facility stopped struggling in front of them.

It seemed like the combatants had taken some casualties from the enemy (Mushi)'s encounter as well, many of goggled figures that were injured because of it were being shoulder carried by their comrades. The teenage boy that was glaring at Touko before, was now sitting lifelessly at the center of the corridor. The Mushitsuki that lost their (Mushi) would lose every emotion they had and become Fallen.

The teenage boy was gazing straight at Touko with his glass marble-like eyes that had neither sadness nor anger in it; just a pair of eyes that could no longer reflect anything with its pupils.

"So this is..... Mushitsuki..."

Touko muttered softly.

"Deputy branch-director, what's your order?"

(Kabuto) spoke right after.

"P-Please take him to the (Garden)..."

Touko felt that her voice was drifting to some place far away.

Daisuke Part 4

The cyan colored ant's body continued to swell on top of Endou lori's fingertip. After growing to the size of a car, it landed on the floor. Its body was covered in thick armor-like shells — like a heavy tank. If it weren't for its rather large head, and the antennae that were flinging about, one could barely tell it was a soldier ant.

“Could you please explain, what are you going to do with Senri?”

lori's gaze was extremely sharp, to the point that one could tell that he was not joking around.

Meanwhile the other teenage boy --- Ogata Akatsuki, gazed cautiously at Daisuke; he hadn't ordered his (Mushi) to prepare for battle yet.

Even though Daisuke was well aware of what was going on, he didn't know what to do.

He was prohibited from fighting outside of the East Central Division's territory. More importantly, these two in front of him were Senri's friends. Daisuke wanted to trust these friends that Senri talked happily with as much as possible.

"How do you guys know about the existence of SEPB?"

Daisuke asked in a very normal tone; rather than using (Kakkou)'s tone.

The one who answered his question was Akatsuki.

"Because I'm a member of the SEPB."

"...What?"

Daisuke gazed surprisedly at Akatsuki as he spoke, completely forgetting about the existence of (Mushi) that was before him.

"I'm a no-rank Mushitsuki of the West Southwest Division, (Kaguya). I've been watching over Senri ever since I enrolled... However, the name of the member that came over from the East Central Division as well as his mission is top secret, so I didn't know the details. Since you came from the East Central Division, you should to be THAT ranked Mushitsuki right?" [TL: (Kaguya) would probably be Tsuki-hime, which means moon princess... well the name sounded cool to me so I didn't care xD.]

"So that means... you exposed your identity to the civilians?..."

After hearing Daisuke's question, Akatsuki's expression darkened.

"Senri is very special to me..... as well as lori-kun and Sunakozaka-san ."



It was something very unbelievable to Daisuke. If the Headquarters knew about this, they would definitely dispatch assassins to hunt them down. Akatsuki should be well aware of that.

"I don't want start any trouble with anyone. But with the current situation, I would recommend you to restrain yourself near Senri, because I..."

"I'm not the same as Akatsuki!"

Interrupting Akatsuki's words, Iori stepped in front.

"No matter who it is, I will not forgive them if they hurt Senri even a single bit. I'll warn you now; my (Hekihei) is very strong!" [TL: The name of the (Mushi) in literal translation would probably be, Jade Soldier.]

The soldier ant next to the teenage boy gave a low roar.

Indeed, judging from his past experience with (Mushi), Daisuke could tell that the soldier ant in front of him would be a tough opponent to deal with; its strength could easily match a ranked Mushitsuki's as well.

Daisuke heaved a sigh and scratched his head.

He understood now, the reason why these two teenage boys dragged him onto the roof on the first day of school.

"... This is not a kid's fight, you know."

After hearing Daisuke's complaint, Iori shouted:

"What did you just say?! ---"

"If i was the member of the Headquarters... No, let's say that if I was a formal member that would report everything I saw to the Headquarters, what would you guys do?"

Hearing a sudden change in Daisuke's tone, the two teenage boys became stunned, as a sense of danger arose within them.

"You're called (Kaguya) right? You will get turned into a Fallen for exposing your identity and the organization's secrets, and then sent to the isolation facility. The ant over there would be classified as rouge Mushitsuki, and get sent to the isolation facility as well. Also, that girl named Sunakozaka, who possibly knew about your guys' secret, would get taken away by Headquarters for investigation and never come back. As for Senri... she would undoubtedly get sent to the research facility."

*Just like Shiika ---*

Daisuke added that line within his heart and didn't say it out loud.

Iori then responded coldly:

“Everything will be fine if we killed you.”

“But they would immediately send an investigative team over tomorrow ... wouldn’t the end result be the same then?”

Iori suddenly became speechless.

“You bunch of idiots!”

After hearing Daisuke’s contemptuous reprimand, Iori snapped.

“You bastard!...”

“Wait a second, Iori-kun.”

Akatsuki stopped Iori from ordering his (Mushi) to attack.

While holding onto Iori’s shoulder, whose expression was distorted from anger, Akatsuki turned and gazed at Daisuke.

"We didn't come here with the intent to negotiate with you; I know you're not the type of person who would report to the Headquarters."

“ ... ”

“We actually knew quite a lot about you from Senri. Well, it was kind of like she let us know about you. Whenever Senri talked about her big brother, she would always mention you. It seems like she trusts you a lot. If Senri trusts you that much, we also want to trust you... After all, she is better at judging people’s characters than us.....”

Through the eyes of Akatsuki, who was explaining patiently, there wasn’t a slightest sign of dishonesty. Indeed, just like what Akatsuki said, Senri could easily understand people’s emotions, and to such a keen level that it was quite incredible.

“ ... ”

Daisuke lowered his head, and stared at his hands silently.

*You're wrong---*

He rejected Akatsuki’s words within his heart.

The one that Senri trusted was the Daisuke when they just met. The one that never deprived anyone of their dream— just purely pursuing his own dream...

Yet Daisuke right now... His hands are stained in blood of many Mushitsuki. In order to protect his dream, he sacrificed many other people’s dreams. And Tachibana Rina, who had the same dream as Daisuke, was one of the victims.



"I..."

Daisuke slightly frowned as he began muttering to himself softly:

"I'm not worthy of staying by Senri's side..."

He clenched his fists tightly.

After raising his head, Daisuke noticed that Iori and Akatsuki were staring at him with perplexed expressions. It seemed they were baffled with Daisuke's sudden change of tone.

"Nevertheless, I treasure Senri a lot; she's just like a little sister to me. I have been protecting her alongside Haji for as long as I can remember, and I'm planning to do so as well in the future. At least, until that guy returns....."

This was Daisuke's true feelings from the bottom of his heart.

After Iori, Akatsuki, and Daisuke exchanged glances for a few minutes, they dropped their shoulders and exhaled a sigh of relief.

Iori clicked his tongue as the cyan colored soldier ant began to shrink rapidly.

"Damn, I guess we don't have an excuse to bully the new guy anymore."

"Iori-kun, I think you're simply jealous, right?"

Iori and Akatsuki both concealed their (Mushi) as they spoke— It seemed Daisuke had prevented the potential risk of a surprise attack for now.

However, Iori was still displaying an angry expression; meanwhile Akatsuki exposed a friendly smile while walking closer to him.

"Sorry about that. Even though it might be weird to say such a thing after we did those rude things to you... Would you like to be friends with us?"

"Don't say friend, it's embarrassing you know?!"

Akatsuki stretched his hand forward, while Iori was still putting up a rigid expression.

However, Daisuke didn't shake Akatsuki's hand; he merely stared at them with his scrutinizing eyes.

He still hadn't forgotten the fact that, because of these two guys, his first day of monitoring got screwed up badly.

"If you guys are willing to kneel down and apologize, then I might think about it... Wait no, if you guys don't do so, I will run to Senri crying, saying that you guys bullied me!"

"..... Can I butcher him right now? I can right?..."

Akatsuki tried to stop Iori who was clutching onto Daisuke's collar.

"Ahh... stop it, it's our fault first anyway."

After hearing that, Iori sounded an unhappy low roar.

"My mission is to monitor Senri and investigate the abnormality that is going on in Housawa Town..."

Daisuke said that as his collar was being tugged by Iori, which caused Iori to immediately stop.

"Abnormality?"

"Since you're a member of the SEPB, you've probably heard of the rumors about the (Mushibane) and the (Church) right?"

Daisuke asked Akatsuki, yet he responded with a surprised look while shaking his head.

"The (Church)...? I-I have never heard of anything of that sort. Well, regarding the abnormality, do you mean the case where numerous West Southwest Division members had gone missing?"

"Huh? There were division members missing?... .."

"Wait wait, what are you guys talking about? The (Church) and ... the (Mushibane)? What are those?"

Daisuke looked at Akatsuki silently, as Iori began to feel irritated next to them.

Daisuke then frowned.

The situation didn't seem to be making sense, how come Akatsuki had never heard of the rumors of (Church) despite him being a member here? And what was up with the case of West Southwest Division's members that had gone missing? Daisuke had never heard of it before.

Just then, a voice resounded from the rooftop door:

"Ahh ---! Iori! Why are you tugging Kusuriya-kun's collar?! What are you trying to do him?!"

"Ehh? tugging?"

It was Azu and Senri. Azu was holding onto Senri's hand, slowly leading her up the stairs carefully.

Iori immediately released Daisuke.

"W-Why did you come here?... Aren't you supposed to be in class?"

"Because Senri was worried about you doing something reckless! Seriously, even Akatsuki is here. What the hell are you guys trying to do?"

"Ah, no, We just ....."

"What is it? Don't tell me you guys are trying to do something to Dai-kun..."

Upon seeing Senri showing a sad look, Iori became flustered.

"N-No such thing! We didn't do anything to him! right, Akatsuki?"

"Uh ---"

Akatsuki turned to look at Daisuke with a troubled look, which caused him to sigh before saying:

"Senri, don't worry. I was asking them questions about the school, that's why it took long."

"Dai-kun."

Senri reached her hand towards Daisuke.

"Uh...?"

Daisuke became speechless as he held onto Senri's hands.

Under the gaze of others, Senri held tightly onto Daisuke's hand with both of her hands. Her soft touch and warmth began to envelope Daisuke's cold hands.

"You're lying."

Senri raised her head angrily to face Daisuke.

Daisuke responded with silence, while Iori and Akatsuki gave alert looks; as if they have done something wrong.

"Ah--- this is bad, this is very bad! I was just curious about what kind of guy he is, so..."

"Woah Iori, why did you suddenly change your attitude 180 degrees? To be honest, you've always had this habit ever since..."

"Sorry, Senri."

Senri turned to Iori, who was puffing out his lips and Akatsuki who apologized honestly, with a look of loneliness, before saying:

"I've known Dai-kun for a long time already, he is very important to me, and Onii-chan also knows him very well... So, if everyone could get along in school, I would be very happy..."

All of the boys, including Daisuke, fell silent.

Finally, Iori shouted as he snatched Daisuke's hand from Senri as if he couldn't endure the silence anymore.

"Ok, I will trust you from now on! If Senri trusts you that much, then I will trust you until the day I die!"

lori jolted Daisuke's hand up and down roughly, while speaking in a tone as if he had given up. Even though his words were quite exaggerated, his eyes were very sincere. Daisuke could not help but frown from his hand being brutally swing up and down by lori.

Akatsuki then reached his hand to hold onto their hands, and stopped lori's action with a smile:

""Until the day you die" That line is quite exaggerating don't you think? Are you serious, lori-kun?"

"Is it wrong to be serious?"

"Nope, it actually feels like your style after all..... Sorry, Kururiya-kun. Everything is our fault."

Daisuke silently lowered his head to look at the hand that the two teenage boys were holding onto.

"..... Dai-kun?"

Senri exposed an uneasy expression.

lori suddenly increased the strength of his grip on Daisuke's hand, and stared at him with a seemingly threatening gaze, while Akatsuki's and Azu's expressions were filled of worries just like Senri.

--- I'm not good at getting along with people.

There was no way Daisuke could say such thing.

"Just call me Daisuke is fine. In my old school, everyone always call me that, so I'm used to it already."

Looking at Daisuke who finally spoke, lori exposed a satisfied smile.

"You can just call me lori."

"I also hope you can call me by my first name as well. Nice to meet you, Daisuke-kun."

Azu, who was standing behind Akatsuki, also smiled naturally while holding onto her cross necklace with her right hand.

"I have been wanting to welcome you ever since the beginning, it's all lori's fault... Ah, you can also call me by my first name!"

"I'm glad, Dai-kun."

Seeing Senri expose a frank smile, Daisuke felt a throbbing pain passing through his chest. He didn't know whether it was caused by the feeling of guilt or perhaps something else.

"Well... What now? It would be bad if we returned back to the class all at once right? So why don't we hang out here to kill time until the next class?!"

No one opposed lori's proposal. Senri and Akatsuki were smiling playfully, while Azu was sighing with a relinquished expression.

The cold wind blew against them as they sat side by side on the silent rooftop.

Daisuke noticed that he had subconsciously relaxed his mood. He then turned to gaze at Senri.

As if she could feel Daisuke's keen gaze, Senri raised her head upwards. Even though her gaze wasn't fixed on Daisuke, her sincere smile put him at ease.

Senri's smile contained a mysterious warm feeling that could forgive everything; the smile that her older brother Keigo was willing to risk his life protecting for.

"..... How many people knew about Senri's (Mushi)?"

Daisuke whispered quietly to Aktsuki whom was sitting next to him, and Akatsuki whispered back:

"There're only me, lori-kun, and Sunakozaka-san who knows. Both lori-kun's and my dream has been devoured a few times by Senri's (Mushi) already ... It seems as if Senri herself hasn't noticed yet. And also, lori-kun was the only one that I mentioned SEPB to."

Senri's (Mushi) was able to distinguish between the desirable dreams and the undesirable dreams. It had only devoured the dream of Daisuke and Keigo in the past. But now that these two had also become the (Mushi)'s target, it meant that Senri herself trusted them quite a lot as well. However, it was not something to feel happy about for those two. As long as they stayed by Senri's side, their life force would gradually drain away.

And yet they still chose to stay by her side despite knowing that...

*--- If Haji knew about this, he probably wouldn't feel good right?*

Nodding lightly with a wry smile, Daisuke turned to look at them.

"I'ma go to get a drink of water."

After saying that, he stood up and began to walk away.

"You know where the water fountains are?"

Surprisingly, it was lori that asked the question. The same one who was putting up with an obviously hostile expression before; was now looking at him with a sincerely concerned expression.

Daisuke smiled and said: "It's fine." before leaving the rooftop.

After walking down the stairs, Daisuke began to look for a deserted place while staying alert of his surroundings.

He walked through a corridor connecting to the other school building and entered an empty classroom. It seemed like it was an audio-visual classroom; four large LCD screens could be seen hanging about the ceiling at different locations.

Daisuke took out his cell phone and dialed a number that was registered in his phone.

The call was connected after two rings.

"[Please confirm that there are no third parties within the radius of 10 meters, and report your member code.]"

Without any greeting, a robot-like female voice sounded through the phone.

Daisuke then said a series of numbers and English letters that he remembered.

"[Confirming the member's code, voice scan -- Complete, switching to communication mode within the bureau.]"

Rather than saying it was a womanly voice, it sounded more like a teenage girl's high pitch voice. However, it was as if the voice was recorded beforehand, and there wasn't a slightest emotion in her tone at all. Shortly after, Daisuke heard the words "Switching completed."

"[Here is the intelligence management department of the Special Environmental Preservation Bureau's Central Headquarters. From now on, all the dialogue would be registered and recorded under the East Central Division inspector squad, Kashu level one ranked member (Kakkou)'s file. Please report the Intel that you need.]"

"The West Southwest Division member didn't hear anything in regard to (Church)'s appearing in Housawa Town. What's going on? What division does the witness belong to?"

Daisuke asked in a low tone, and the answer was immediately replied:

"[Any Intel pertaining to one of (The Original Three), (Shinpu) and the (Church) are only available to ranked members. Please confirm this and make further contact. In addition, we have been instructed to hand all of the Intel (Kakkou) would need for his mission, directly to deputy branch-director Goromaru—and she has to sign it before we could give it to you directly.]"

"I remember that yesterday she said that she forgot to do them because she fell asleep early..... I wanted to know them right now."

"[She's really slacking off, I'll urge Goromaru-san to hurry up and finish her duties as soon as possible.]"

The teenage girl then continued with the same mechanical tone:

"[The witness intelligence was provided by the ordinary civilian, since there were many similar features between them, we have concluded the building as the (Church) that would appear along with (Shinpu); the original that's capable birthing the Special type (Mushi). Only level five ranked or higher members are allowed to view further details. Would you like to view them?]"

"Mhm."

"[The (Church)'s unique trait is its old torn appearance, it would only appear for a short period of time before disappearing. Based on the witness intelligence we obtained, (Church)-like objects had been seen appearing for around five minutes somewhere in Housawa Town. The witness's location and related information will be sent later to (Kakkou)'s goggles.]"

Daisuke began to sink in his thoughts.

(The Original Three)--- They are the three dangerous existences that are capable of birthing Mushitsuki. Hence, the Special Environmental Preservation Bureau classified them as the dangerous prototype (Mushi) rank. Even though (The Original Three)'s ecology and purposes are still unknown, the SEPB was able to collect a little bit of data about them slowly over time.

The most eye catching one in (The Original Three) was a woman called (Oogui). Although there was no way to determine whether she was actually a human and whether her gender is female. All that was known about her was that she likes to appear in front of humans, and that all of the people whose dreams were devoured by her would become Minion type Mushitsuki— where their (Mushi) would be separated from the host's body just like Iori. And so far we also know that her appearance is that of a young female, and her intelligence is very high. In addition, she's capable of disguise herself into someone else that is totally different.

Among (The Original Three), (Shinpu) was known for its trait of being different from the other two. Although there were only a few witness accounts about him, he was known to appear at least once or twice every year, and whenever he appeared, a (Church)-like object would always appear alongside. His behavior patterns were totally different than free-spirited (Oogui) and the mysterious third one; he would always repeat the same action— as if he was possessed.

He would appear in front of those that were lost and proclaimed to give them "Salvation". But in the end, all he ever did was turn them into Mushitsuki rather than bringing them salvation, so in his behavior existed a certain pattern.

Mushitsuki birthed by (Shinpu) were known as the Special type, a type that was totally different than the Minion type and Fusion type. This type was known for its unique trait of being not-shaped --- in other words, the (Mushi) doesn't have a physical shape of itself.

Senri is a Special type Mushitsuki, which means, it was (Shinpu) who turned her into a Mushitsuki.

Meanwhile, the appearance of the last original is still unknown. It's capable of birthing Fusion type Mushituki, where the (Mushi) has to fuse with the host's body to activate its ability, just like Daisuke. Completely opposite of (Oogui) who likes to overeat, this original is very mysterious and rare, in fact there have only been three eyewitness accounts about it the past.

Including Daisuke, there are total of three Mushitsuki that were birthed by this original. And since the witness statements that came from these three were totally different, they concluded that this original most likely has the same ability of disguise as (Oogui).

"[I would recommend you to contact deputy branch-director Goromaru as soon as possible, to receive the data. Do you need any other Intel?]"

"One more thing, this hasn't been confirmed yet, but did you hear anything about the West Southwest Division's members going missing in Housawa Town?"

Daisuke suddenly recalled the words Akatsuki said, so he asked without giving it much thought.

"[Such intelligence wasn't registered in the system, please verify the details and make further contact if necessary.]"

"So even the Headquarters didn't receive this report as well huh?....."

"[Are these all the Intel that you need?]"

After thinking for a while, Daisuke continued in a very stern tone:

"What's the main reason that the Headquarters deployed me for this mission? Why are they transferring me away from the East Central Division, and further prohibited me from fighting outside of my respective division's area?! These conditions are strange no matter how you look at them!"

"[Only ranks that are higher than director assistant are allowed to view the main purpose of each member's mission. In addition, the Central Headquarters was granted permission to jointly view (Kakkou)'s current mission in detail as a special case.]"

"Damn it, what the hell?"

The opposite party silently listened to Daisuke's complaints.

"[Are these all the Intel you need?]"

"..."

"[Please continue to carry out your mission, recording completed.]"

The other party intended to finish the call, yet Daisuke didn't plan on hanging up the call.

After a few seconds, Daisuke spoke again:

"(C)! Can you explain what's going on?!"

"... (Kakkou), shouldn't you be aware of it by now?"

The same tone from before questioned Daisuke:

"At the (Fuyuhotaru) incident before, (Kakkou) you had completely surpassed the definition of Mushitsuki that was gradually built up over the past. Not only did you successfully capture the Hishu level one (Fuyuhotaru) for the second time, you also eliminated (Ladybird)'s matured (Mushi) with your



own strength. Of course the Central Headquarters would be very troubled by your exceeding fighting power."

Daisuke became speechless as she continued. What (C) had said was indeed the truth.

Leaving aside (Fuyuhotaru), the battle between him and (Ladybird) --- Tachibana Rina; was really a death match.

To Mushitsuki in general, Maturation was known for the most dreadful dead-end. Those that had their dream fully devoured by the (Mushi) would die, while their (Mushi) would mature and go on a rampage, destroying everything in its path without reservation. The (Mushi) after maturation would also greatly increase its strength at an unbelievable rate. For example, after Kashu level one ranked Rina's (Mushi) fully matured, just one strike from it was enough to destroy a city and turn it to ruins.

"Troubled? Aha, how would that sly head director feel troubled by this? Tell me the truth!"

After a short moment of silence, (C) replied faintly:

"Out of the four currently existing level one ranked Mushitsuki, only Harukiyo possess a threat. (Ladybird) has died already, and SEPB had also taken control of (Fuyuhotaru). In my opinion, it means that ..."

"So you're saying in case there's an emergency, it's okay for them if I die?"

Daisuke's face was distorted from anger.

He more or less guessed true the reason.

Since the threats posed by two level one ranked Mushitsuki were excluded already, he had become useless to them. Moreover, the Central Headquarters probably thought that he, who's exceedingly powerful in combat ability, would be hard to control.

"If Harukiyo makes a move, are they planning on using Shiika.....?"

"(Fuyuhotaru)'s ability is completely opposite of Harukiyo's. If there's an outbreak, she would probably be more suitable than you. However, there still exists some problem..... Since according to the rules, the division of the member that captured the Mushitsuki has the right to take them under their control."

"So that was what they were trying to do by weakening the East Central Division?! They want to take over the East Central Division with Haji's absence in authority, just so they can take Shiika all to themselves?"

"It was just an assumption. However, there might be a possibly of it..."

"Don't fuck with me!..... How can I let them act as they wish, I'm going back to Ouka City right ---"

"You can't!"

(C) immediately stopped Daisuke.

"Right now... please be patient, if you were to rebel against the Headquarters, everything will be over."

"It's the Headquarters that's forcing me to rebel! I ---"

"Even if it's you, (Kakkou), it's not to your favor right now to rebel against the Headquarters. Not to mention if they were to deploy that squad..."

"... Which squad?"

"'Annihilator', the squad that serves directly under the head director. Just like what their name implies, they are the existence that would turn everything into ashes... If they were to find out that you breached the order, not only you, but also branch-director Haji's younger sister would be adversely affected."

The teenage girl suppressed her tone before saying:

"... Only you --- are willing to the defeat (The Original Three), as long as you still alive. There will eventually be one day when we can... So please!..."

The teenage girl's plea began to expand deeply into Daisuke's heart as he clenched his fists tightly and said:

"Don't push that onto me, I just wanted to protect my own dream!"

"..."

His own dream --- The first thing that came to Daisuke's mind after blurting out that line... was the face of a teenage girl.

He had determined that one day he would definitely make Shiika smile from the bottom of her heart... Yet he didn't even know how she is doing right now.

"Shiika... how's she right now?"

"She's in pretty good condition right now ... Since this intelligence was supposed to only available for those rank of branch director-assistant or higher, please keep it confidential."

Daisuke sighed and said:

"I'll try to finish up the mission faster and return back to Ouka City."

*In order to protect the place where I belong.*

Daisuke closed his eyes, and soon, an image of a short haired girl with a shy smile appeared in his mind.

"One last thing."

(C) exhorted with a cold tone:

"(Kakkou), please pay attention to the surroundings, the enemy might be around you any time."

"...? What do you mean?..."

"That's all I can say for now, I wish you good luck on your mission."

The communication was then cut off.

Daisuke slightly opened his eyes, and put the cell phone into his pocket.

He originally had wanted to think about the meaning of that last piece of advice, but he gave up halfway through. There wasn't any use of thinking about it further, since right now; he had way too many opponents to deal with.

There would eventually be one day --- (C)'s words penetrated into Daisuke's heart.

"After all... We could only rely on such hope to live on?....."

While muttering to himself, Daisuke walked out of the room.

"I guess this means I have to struggle even harder from now on, right? Haji....."

After crossing the corridor and walking upstairs to the rooftop, Daisuke saw Senri and others laughing at each other.

2.00

## Daisuke Part 5

A few days had already passed since Daisuke arrived at Housawa Town.

Taking advantage of a holiday, he took a stroll to the plaza area.

Daisuke leaned against a wall near the entrance to the plaza area along with Iori and Akatsuki. The three of them stood shoulder to shoulder, gazing dazedly at the passing pedestrians.

Compared to Daisuke's plain outfit— a pair of jeans and shirt with coat; the other two's outfit seemed more fashionable. Iori was wearing a long striped pant with chains attached near the side his waist and a befitting coat. On the other hand, Akatsuki was wearing a light jacket. And just like what Senri had described, Iori had a quite handsome look, while Akatsuki was also popular with the girls in the school.

The white mist that they breathed out was so thin that they were nearly invisible. Even though it was already noon, the sky was still gloomy and cloudy; there wasn't even slightest sign of the temperature rising.

Only till noon, did the plaza begin to have the bustling feeling of a normal crowded square.

“...”

Daisuke forked his hands into the pockets of his coat, and began to think about the things happened at Housawa Town.

During the past few days, he had been investigating the incidents behind Senri's back.

However, even though he was "investigating", it was actually nothing more than visiting the area where the witness reported, and collecting Intel on the remnants of (Mushibane) from the West Southwest Division. However, there just wasn't any progress at all on both cases.

“It's hard to believe that both (Mushibane) and (Shinpu) are both lurking in this small town.”

After Akatsuki said that, Iori nodded his head with a “Mhm”.

The so call (Mushibane) --- is a rebel organization that was formed to fight against the Special Environmental Preservation Bureau. With one call from their leader, they constructed a nationwide network within less than a year. However, during the past few weeks, they had been slowly falling apart due to the loss of their strong leader (Ladybird). And the one who defeated the (Ladybird) was a member of the Special Environmental Preservation Bureau, (Kakkou) --- who was none other than Daisuke himself.

To Daisuke, right now was probably the best chance to defeat both (Mushibane) and (Shinpu), one of (The Original Three). Yet at the same time, it also meant that something major would happen in this town.

“This town really hasn’t changed at all.”

Daisuke whispered softly.

“Oh that’s right, Daisuke-kun. Senri mentioned that you used to live here before.”

Akatsuki finished as he walked away, causing Daisuke to wonder where he was going. And it turned out to be that he was just picking up an empty can that was littered by a pedestrian.

“Yo!”

Akatsuki then threw the empty can to lori who was slightly raising his hand. And after lori caught the empty can, he dumped it in the garbage can next to him.

Daisuke felt surprised before subconsciously muttered: “Oh...”

“Even though it’s just a small empty can, someone might trip over because of it.”

It was pretty obvious who he was referring to. He then continued to add on:

“If it was me in the past, I wouldn’t give a damn about that empty can. I would just go and beat the crap outa those that litterers.”

After watching Akatsuki walk back, lori asked Daisuke.

“..... Were you living with Senri before just like now?”

Daisuke thought for a second before realizing the direction of the topic. Even though lori was saying that with a smile, his eyes were not friendly at all.

Both lori and Akatsuki had to commute to school every day since they lived outside of the Housawa town, while Azu lived in the same town as lori.

Daisuke laughed. He thought that lori, who couldn’t hide his jealousy, was quite funny.

“I only lived here for a short while before.”

“Tsk, letting her live with a guy with a dual personality like you was enough to make me worry!”

“Eh, dual personality? Me?”

“Indeed, the normal Daisuke-kun and the Daisuke-kun during the investigation after school felt quite different.”

Akatsuki said with a wryly smile.

“Oh by the way, I haven’t seen your (Mushi) yet. What rank level are you, Daisuke-kun? A no-rank member like me could never get any Intel about you.”

“It doesn’t matter what rank level I am, as long as I stay in this town, I can’t fight.”

“Dai-kun, how are you gonna protect Senri like that?”

Daisuke scoffed at lori’s joke, but suddenly, lori spoke with a different expression:

“So.....”

“Mmm?”

“At that time... Was – Senri ...”

lori sneak peaked at Daisuke for a second before he continued to whisper haltingly. Judging from his normal attitude, this reaction was quite rare in a way.

“Was – Senri ..... As cute as she is now?”

Daisuke stood dumbfounded right on the spot, while staring at lori with his widened eyes.

Silence then fell between them for a while before Daisuke and Akatsuki burst into laughter.

“W-What?! Stop laughing!”

The blushing lori kicked both Daisuke and Akatsuki on their legs. They didn’t even bother dodging lori’s kicks, and just kept laughing non-stop.

After the laughter had subsided, their stomach was hurting as if it was in cramp. Daisuke then recalled that he hadn’t laugh like this for a while already.

“Want... Want me to bring my album next time for you to see?”

“Stop joking with me, bastard.....”

“lori-kun, you don’t want to see it?”

Akatsuki mocked with a smile, which caused lori to become speechless.

“I just don’t want to see Daisuke’s photos...”

“That you don’t have to worry, besides the profile photo that was registered under SEPB’s database, I have no other photos.”

“..... Why?”

“It’s like that for all of us. SEPB prohibited us from leaving too much trace of our lives.”

Akatsuki, who was also one of the SEPB members, said:

Iori put up a complex expression as he glanced at Daisuke and Akatsuki.

"You guys have it hard eh?..."

"Used to it already."

While saying that, Daisuke began recalling Senri's figure from the past because they mentioned photos.

"Ah, but ... compared to before, Senri really did grow quite a lot!"

After hearing Daisuke's words, Iori seemed to be thinking about something and asked with a stern look:

"Hey, that kind of statement would make people curious, you know! What part of her did you mean?"

"Umm what part..."

Within Daisuke's mind, the image that he saw not so long ago after arriving at Housawa Town began to surface, which caused his face to blush immediately.

"Eh? Daisuke-kun... Your face is turning red..."

"Huh, really? ---"

Daisuke turned his face away, trying to obscure his blushing face, yet was stopped by Iori's hand.

"Daisuke, What's the meaning of this? What have you done to her?"

"I-I didn't do anything!"

"Iori-kun, don't use violence..."

"Tell me the truth! Or else I will choke you to death!"

Iori's eyes were very serious, which caused Daisuke to avoid his gaze.

"I ... I didn't mean to... It was an accident, or you can say I was tricked by Miki-san..."

"Say it!"

"Uh..... I opened the door ... when she was changing her clothes..."

"Ehhh? Daisuke-kun, does that mean you... ..!"

Iori nodded his head seriously before saying:

"... Okay, continue. How does Senri look?..."

"Eh... Ehhh?! Iori-kun, what are you saying?!"

Iori hooked the panicking Akatsuki's neck with his free arm and said:

"You obviously wanted to know as well right, stop pretending!"

"Huh... What are you saying, I.....!"

"Then piss off if you don't want to!"

"Uuu..."

Just then, Daisuke shifted his gaze upward from the blushing Akatsuki, and immediately froze.

"Hey, Daisuke. Can you tell us more in detail about---"

"That's enough! Hentai trio!"

A strong voice filled with anger sounded behind Iori's back.

Following after Daisuke, those two's face began to turn pale as they turned their head about, before frozen in place from fear just like Daisuke.

Standing In front of them were Sunakozaka Azu that was forking her hands on her waist while glaring, and Senri with her face blushing red.

Since today was a holiday, they have decided to hang out together. But due to Senri's hairstyle not being done by the time Azu came pick her up, the girls were slightly delayed on arrival.

---The five of them that finally regrouped, began walking across the plaza streets.

In order to match Senri's pace, all of them slowed down to her walking speed. Hence every once in a while, there would be pedestrian that passed them by.

"Okay, where are we going to eat lunch? Is there any store around that has a space for five people?"

Azu, who's was walking in the front, said as she looked around. She was wearing a coat embroidered with detailed flower patterns, a short skirt, and a pair of boots; while hanging the rosary that she always wore at school in front of her chest.

"That's not right... Azu-chan..."

Senri said with a smile as she faced Azu, her right hand was holding Azu's hand, while her left was holding the cane. Due to Miki's skilled fashion sense, Senri's outfit and hairstyle would always have a new look every day. And today, she was wearing a cotton-made hem coat, while her hair was tied into two tails that intertwined with each other in a complex form.

"You can't count hentais as people, you know?"



“Ah, my bad. They don’t even need to sit then.”

“Then, Azu-chan. Does hentaïs need to eat?”

“Ah, my bad again. Pet food should be good enough for them; shall we go get some right now?”

Behind the girls that were chit-chatting lively, a group of three guys could be seen walking humiliated with their heads hung low.

“Damn it, why did I have to... It’s all Daisuke’s fault! Why did you invite Azu along?!”

“I was obviously trying to stop you guys... yet...”

“Senri is pretty scary when she’s angry...”

In the end, those five went to their usual fast food restaurant to eat their lunches.

During the meal, it seemed like Iori and Akatsuki was quite successfully on pleasing Senri, and hence obtained her forgiveness. While on the other hand, Daisuke didn’t get any chance to talk to her at all because he was sitting the farthest from her. Azu even stepped on his foot and said: “Get down to your knees and beg for mercy!”

After leaving the fast food restaurant, Iori suddenly proposed:

“Let’s go to Karaoke later on! I’ll see if I can get any discount coupons from them. Akatsuki, come with me!”

Just then everyone was putting up a perplexed looks, Iori turned and signaled a glance at both Daisuke and Senri.

Even though Daisuke didn’t get what he was trying to pull, Akatsuki and Azu immediately understood his intention. After giggling to each other for a bit, they left Daisuke and Senri’s side.

“Okay, I’m coming! Senri and Daisuke-kun stay here for a while, we will be back very soon.”

“I’ll go take a look on what movies they are having today then!”

Before Azu left, she poked Daisuke’s shoulder lightly and whispered: “Hurry up and apologize!”

With this, Daisuke finally understood what they were planning. Iori probably wanted created a chance for him to apologize since he didn’t get any chance to talk to her before.

The two of them that were left behind fell in silence for a while.

“Ugh..... Wanna take a seat first?”

“Mhm.”

Holding Senri's hand, Daisuke brought her to a bench that was near the sidewalk. And after sitting down shoulder to shoulders, their hands were still holding together.

"You see what I mean?"

Senri said with a smile:

"Iori-kun is very considerate, right? He seemed to worry about us."

Even though Senri seemed to have realized Iori's intention already, she was still putting a happy expression.

Daisuke smiled as well, yet immediately turned his head facing the road and said:

"Sorry Senri..."

"It's fine, I don't mind at all."

"... You're really upset about it right....?... And also, please don't tell Haji about this..."

"What should I do---??"

Senri giggled playfully, yet Daisuke was unable to smile along. If that guy knew about this, he would really slaughter Daisuke right on the spot without any hesitation.

"But..... Mmmm..."

Senri lowered her head as a faint blush could be seen appearing on her cheeks.

"Was... it strange?"

"Huh?"

"I-I can't see myself..... So..... If it's different from the other girls, then... .."

With a blushing face, she tried to finish her sentence, yet was unable to sound them out very clearly due to embarrassment. Senri probably had struggled really hard before saying those words.

Just then, Daisuke smiled and held Senri's hand slightly harder.

Since Senri is a girl after all, of course she would be wondering about those things right? Daisuke didn't notice this at all in the past, perhaps Senri purposely hid her concern away from him?

"It was not strange at all."

Daisuke said as he began to recall that moment when he saw her fair skin, and couldn't help but blush up as well.

“Uh... I don't quite know...; and since I have never seen any other girl's... but I felt that... yours was very beautiful...”

“.....”

“Ah! I didn't mean anything perverted...!”

Senri raised her head to face Daisuke who was in panic trying to interpret his meanings.

The teenage girl then immediately exposed a weak smile, an innocent and frank smile from the bottom of her heart.

“Really?... Thank god.”

Using his free hand, Daisuke scratched his cheek as he shifted his gaze away from Senri.

A strange yet wonderful silence that was different from before enveloped them.

With no topic to chat with, they just gazed silently at the lively streets across from them.

Shortly after, Daisuke saw Iori and the others walking toward them from faraway. They were smiling as they looked at both Daisuke and Senri, while whispering to each other.

*What are they talking about?*

“I wonder... how is Onii-chan doing right now”

Senri suddenly spoke, causing Daisuke to gaze at her profile. Just then, Iori, Akatsuki, and Azu stopped in front of them.

“I have been having nightmares lately...”

“Nightmares?”

“A nightmare about everyone disappearing in front of me... Including Onii-chan, and Dai-kun...”

Senri bit her lips. Daisuke could feel that her hand was slightly trembling.

“I could hear a voice telling me that, the reason why everyone disappeared was because of my existence... it said that it was me who... erased... everyone...”

The teenage girl turned and gaze at Daisuke with an expression what was close to tears.

“Was it all because of me? ... Am I really... a burden to everyone?...”

Senri's uneasiness could be felt flowing over from her trembling hands and her closed lips.

Congenitally disabled with a frail body, and --- even though she hasn't realized it yet, fact that she was a Mushitsuki, was probably gradually eroding her mind and soul... Just the fear of falling whenever was

enough to make average people afraid yet she... Even though Senri dislike showing any weak side of her, due to her condition, it was probably hard for her to smile even a bit.

Moreover, Senri would never act over-spoiled. It was probably due to her over-sensitivity to her surroundings and her kindness, that she felt she might cause people trouble. And all of those concerns, Daisuke knew them better than anyone else.

Iori seemed like he was unable to endure it anymore, and was intent on opening his mouth and speak.

But, Daisuke took the lead and overlapped his free hand onto the hand that was holding onto Senri before saying:

“Can you feel?” [TL note: This sentence was said in broken Jap/English!! You rock Daisuke~ ^^]

“... Eh?”

“We watched it before didn’t we? I’m re-enacting that scene from the movie that you said you loved.”

It was three years ago during the time when Daisuke was still in this town, a scene in a movie that they watched together. The content of the movie was about a blind musician’s life. Concerned about Senri’s condition and feelings, Miki proposed to them to watch something else, yet because of Senri’s eager desire to learn about the content of the movie. In the end, Daisuke, Senri, and Keigo went to the movie theater and watched it. (That movie theater had closed down now though)

Senri liked movies very much, hence she had been learning multiple languages through hearing alone starting at very young age. She especially loved the movies with multiple language dialogues. Even now, she hoped she could engage in translation-related careers in the future.

Even after they were out of the movie theater, Senri was still crying non-stop. The Daisuke at that time didn’t understand why she was crying, yet he knew that her tears weren’t just solely because of her being touched by the movie, but rather more of a mixture of fear and anxiety. Keigo then spoke while holding Senri’s hand with his usual shallow smile, explaining to Daisuke ---

--- Senri was crying because of the certain scene in the movie.

--- Can you feel?

Those were the words that the protagonist’s lifetime partner said during that scene, while holding the protagonist’s hand, vowing to be by her side for eternity.

Senri raised her head surprisedly to look at Keigo as she cried even louder. Yet in her tears, there wasn’t any more uneasiness or fear feeling mixing along. Keigo had vowed to stay by her side.

But now, he’s not here to tell her the truth. Then at least before he returns, Daisuke will protect Senri at all cost. No matter what happens--- He will definitely protect the place where Keigo and Senri belong.

"It is the opposite, you know? Whether it's Haji, or me. We are all trying our hardest because of you, Senri..."

Just then, Daisuke noticed the gazes of the other three, and revealed a smile before continuing:

"I'll hold your hand forever. And not only me, there would always be people around you that are willing to do the same; you should be able to feel it right?"

"....."

"We all like Senri. Aside from that, do we need any other reasons?"

Daisuke's words penetrated the teenage girl's heart, causing her expression to look more and more complex.

Then finally, as if she couldn't endure it anymore, tears began to shed down from her cheeks.

She was probably bearing everything ever since Keigo left her side, right?

Huge tears began to fall onto their holding hands one after another.

Daisuke stayed silent until the last minute when she stopped crying.

Meanwhile, Iori was gazing at Senri with a deep-in-thought looking expression, while Akatsuki was revealing a warm smile, and Azu was closing her eyes as she held tightly onto her rosary.

After a while, Senri wiped her eyes and flashed a very innocent and warm smile, saying:

"Thanks!"

Daisuke smiled in response:

"Oh, Iori and others finally came back."

Daisuke's remark snapped the dazing trio out of their day dreams, making them turned to look at each other perplexedly before Iori suddenly blurted out:

"Ah... Sorry, we're late."

Seeing Iori's awkward expression, Akatsuki and Azu turned their gaze away in order to stop themselves from bursting into laughter.

--- After 5 minutes had passed.

The five of them stood shoulder to shoulder, checking out the flyers that were on the ground one by one.

"Hey, this one has one hour of free service and it's around here!"

“Iori, are you an idiot?! If we’re going to sing for at least three hours, this one over here that gives 20% off is way better right? Not to mention it gives free drinks!”

“Sunakozaka-san got a movie coupon from those people too, and so we got 300 yen off, but ---”

“I think both karaoke and movie are fine.”

“Dai-kun, stop that! You’re being too unassertive about this... Oh yea, wasn’t the open live of our school’s popular music club today as well? They specifically gave me a braille version of their flyers before!”

The pedestrians turned their head surprisedly to gaze at these five that were having their meeting openly on the street. Aside from Daisuke, most of them didn’t mind the attention that they were getting.

“Ah--- No, no! Their music is too old-fashioned, you can’t count that music as rock!”

“A Christian that likes rock music... How rare is that... Oh by the way, I didn’t bring that much money... So if we also go Karaoke, I probably won’t have enough...”

“Huh? That means we can’t even go watch movies then!”

“Mmm --- I guess we can only go there then...”

“Mhm, I also think going there would be best.”

Seeing both Senri and Akatsuki nodding their head, Daisuke couldn’t help but frown and asked:

“Where?”

Just then, Iori groaned “Ah, going there again?”

“Who’s the one that said they didn’t bring enough money?”

Azu said as she patted on his shoulder like usual.

“Hehe, it’s a place that Dai-kun knows very well!”

Senri smiled happily as she spoke, while the other three also smiled at Daisuke.

She then reached her hand to hold onto Daisuke who had a perplexed expression, while Akatsuki quickly held onto her other hand; one step ahead of Iori. Facing Iori’s furious glare, Akatsuki smiled nonchalantly as if it was nothing.

The five of them picked a side of the sidewalk where there were less people, and started walking shoulder to shoulder. Daisuke, Senri, and Akatsuki were walking in the front, while Iori and Azu were following behind.

Even though they had decided where to go, no one intended to reveal where their destination was, including Senri.

“By the way, lori, why did you skip the PART meeting again?! They forced me to sub for you, you know?!”

Azu complained as she stared at lori, while walking.

“Ah --- you meant during yesterday’s lunch break? Something urgent came up in the club, can’t blame me.”

“Weren’t you playing soccer for fun?”

“PART?”

After hearing the conversation behind him, Daisuke asked curiously, which Senri immediately explained:

“It’s the “Barrier-free life style” Committee. It was Azu-chan that came up with that name last summer. Although it hasn’t been officially recognized yet, most students had already started calling it with that name.”

“And since “Barrier-free life style” was too wordy and contrived at times, we have decided to switch to “PART” for the title, which is a shorter version of “Partner”.

Azn said happily, while flashing a victory sign with her hand.

The so-called Barrier free life style committee was the result of the unique mechanism that the Moira private university-affiliated high school had adapted. The school enrolled students with disabilities and provide them with discrimination-free environment, while promoting team spirit and cooperation among the other students. The Barrier free life style committee --- which also known as PART, was created to promote such ethos.

Even though Daisuke had only been here no more than a week, he could clearly see the actual effectiveness of such system.

Basically, there would one, at most two, students with disabilities in each class. Using Senri’s class as an example, including textbook and exams, they would specially prepare a braille version for her. Since there was a hearing-impaired student in Akatsuki’s classroom, the school had prepared electronics devices for such students to learn materials with.

This sort of mechanism was also one of the reasons why Moira private high school had enrolled so many enrolled students. According to rumors, the board of education would occasionally send surveyors over there to see learn from the school.

“Changing the name of the committee, how could ever you think of that? Are you an idiot?”

Daisuke turned his head around, and saw Azu swinging her finger while saying:

"No, no! There's actually a bigger idiot than me here."

"... Who are you talking about?"

Iori protested softly, while Senri and Akatsuki were trying their best not to laugh.

"Is it Iori-kun?"

The one who answered was Akatsuki.

"Yup, we also discussed the direction of each class in the PART meetings. In addition, we also decide which students from each class would be working and assisting the students with disabilities. Since the original intention was to promote team spirit and cooperation amongst the students.

"But a certain idiot suggested something different on the first meeting after he joined the committee, which was to take a voluntary approach. He even said tons of other bullshit, but I guess the true reason was so that he could take Senri all for himself."

"Eh...really? Iori-kun, is that true?"

"I told you it's not that already! I just hate switching partners every day as if we're playing soccer or something..."

Seeing Senri's surprised face, Iori immediately blurted his reasoning out. Even though he was trying to stay calm, his slightly blushing cheeks were giving it all away; which really looked like his usual style.

"So, that's why in our class it's always Iori and Azu that are taking charge of Senri?"

Azu shook her head in respond to Daisuke's question.

"No, even though Iori's suggestion was quite reasonable, everyone thought that it would be disturbing to the particular person so they rejected it right on the spot. However..."

"After a few days later, they suddenly passed the policy, but only limited to our class."

"Ya, that was quite weird... I wondered what happened... Senri, did you hear anything about it?"

Facing Iori and Azu's perplexed expressions, Senri could not help but giggle lightly as she turned to Akatsuki:

"Akatsuki-kun, can I tell them?"

"Eh?"

The one who sounded that was Akatsuki himself.

"I secretly asked the teachers before why is our class the only one that's using Iori-kun's idea."

"Uh..."



“And the truth is that, it was Akatsuki-kun that had deliberately went and discussed this with the teachers right after the meeting. Saying that even though this idea was hard to perform, but it’s not something that can be ignored. So he suggested that we should try this idea out on our own class as an experiment.... That was what you said to the teachers right? Akatsuki-kun?”

Just then, everyone’s gaze turned to Akatsuki, causing him to alert his gaze while smirking.

“Wow really?! So it was you who helped out eh? Thanks for that dude!”

Iori hooked his arm around Akatsuki’s neck, while saying that with a teasing tone.

“Yohoo --- Akatsuki-kun, you’re so cool! Oh yea, now that you mentioned it, the four of us had been hanging out quite often starting from then, right?”

“Thank you, Akatsuki-kun”

“It’s no problem, I didn’t do much anyway. I should’ve let you guys know but I thought it was unnecessary. And not to mention, it was all because of Iori’s idea that we could hang out like this, so the one you need to thank should be Iori-kun.”

“Oh--- Akatsuki, are you trying to increase your status by praising others, eh?”

“... Iori-kun, since when has your personality become this bad?...”

“Iori-kun, and Azu chan, I need to thank you two as well.”

Senri turned and revealed an innocent and frank smile, causing them to turn and smirk shyly.

After walking for a while, Daisuke suddenly stopped after noticing that his shoelaces were loose. He told everyone to go ahead without him.

“...? Azu, what’s wrong?”

However, Azu stopped along with Daisuke. Raising his head, Daisuke noticed that she was gazing at him with a curious expression.

“Umm... Daisuke-kun, are you a Mushitsuki as well?”

Azu blurted that out abruptly. However, there wasn’t slightest fear in her tone, but more of a concerned feeling toward Daisuke.

“Can’t tell you that. But nevertheless, you should know already right?”

“Mhm... Daisuke-kun, you’re also giving out the same atmosphere just like Akatsuki-kun and Iori.”

After tying his shoelaces, Daisuke stood up and continued walking, While Azu followed along.

“In the end, I’m the only one that’s not a Mushitsuki... ..”

“...”

“It actually felt quite lonely, you know? If that’s how it is, I too should just ---”

“Stop thinking about unhealthy stuff like that.”

Daisuke whispered softly, while facing forward.

After hearing Daisuke’s sudden change in tone, Azu shrank her shoulder as if she was surprised.

“Sorry.”

Azu whispered with a light tone as she lowered her head down. However, it only lasted for a few seconds before she raised her head up, and immediately revealed her unique smile while saying:

“Anyway, there’s no way for me to become a Mushitsuki after all. Since I don’t have any dream that I want to fulfill! By the way, if I were to say those things to Iori, you think he would be mad?”

“Of course he would.”

“Does Daisuke-kun... you also have a dream?”

Azu asked, causing Daisuke to emerge a smile on his face.

“Mhm, I do...”

Sparkled with curiosity, Azu came closer to Daisuke and asked:

“What kind of dream is it? Tell me!”

“Nope, can’t tell you.”

“Ehhh --- Why not?! It’s not like it’s gonna hurt if you tell me!”

“Of course it would, I’m a Mushitsuki after all.”

After saying that, Daisuke immediately covered his mouth up. As a member of the Special Environmental Preservation Bureau, they must never expose their identities as a Mushitsuki or else they would be assassinated, just like the Iori and Akatsuki’s case when Daisuke just met them.

“Ahh--- busted~ Hehe.”

Azu then giggled mischievously for a few seconds.

Watching the figures of the other three walking in front of them, Azu suddenly stopped while fixing her gaze straight ahead and asked:

“Daisuke-kun..... Can I ask you something?”

“Mmm?”

“Are you not afraid of Senri?”

Holding the rosary in front of her chest tightly, Azu turned and gaze at Daisuke. In her expression, a mixture of confusion, struggling, and sorrow could be felt.

“Whenever we’re with Senri....Both Iori and Akatsuki-kun would occasionally expose painful expression. It’s all because of Senri, right?”

Daisuke couldn’t answer her question.

Even though Senri’s (Mushi) would deprive others of their dreams, it would only do so from certain specific targets. Although its targets were only Daisuke and Senri’s older brother, Keigo in the past, it seemed to have targeted both Iori and Akatsuki’s dreams now as well.

“Are you scared? Azu.”

Being afraid of these mysterious (Mushi) was something very usual and common. Which also meant, being afraid of those that are infested by these (Mushi) are normal as well. This kind of concept had become a norm and gradually rooted in the deepest part of general public.

Yet Azu shook her head, while gazing at the ground. From the side of her profile, Daisuke could catch a glimpse of her biting onto her lips.

“It’s not scared, but just... wondered, how could Senri smile like that? It was because of her that Iori became a Mushitsuki...”

Hearing that, Daisuke’s heart skipped a beat.

Even though Azu’s voice was very light; to a point where it was barely hearable. After listening to it more closely, she did say that it was Senri who turned Iori into a Mushitsuki.

If her words were true ----

Azu suddenly raised her head, turning to Daisuke and said:

“Ah... Sorry, I was just muttering. It’s nothing!”

“You said it was Senri that Iori ... .. What do you mean by that?”

If what she said were true, then this case had become very serious to a point where it can’t be ignored anymore. According to what Daisuke had known, Senri’s (Mushi) would only devour the dreams of other, but would not give birth to any Mushitsuki like (The Original Three). So if what Azu said were true, then...

A painful expression flashed through Azu's face, yet she immediately eased it after a deep breath, and continued walking.

"... Even though Iori had become more steady and matured, during his junior high, he was quite rebellious."

Daisuke walked along Azu, listen silently to her words.

"He was pretty much a bully back when he was still young. And even now, whenever I walk with him near to the place where we used to live, there are people who avoid him."

Azu smiled as if she had recalled something wonderful, while continuing:

"But after he enrolled in this high school, after meeting Senri, he had completely changed... Starting from then on, he would occasionally space out as if he was deep in thought. I guess it was during that time that he had become a Mushitsuki... And when I went and asked him, he even told me shyly that "I have things I want to do", totally not like him..."

So it was like that ---

After hearing Azu's word, Daisuke generally understood the reason why Iori became a Mushitsuki. And that reason was completely related to the things that he was worrying about. While feeling at ease, Daisuke had also noticed the feeling of the teenage girl next to him.

"It felt like I was the only one that's being left behind, only I have not yet found my dream... That's why, if I become a Mushitsuki like Iori then ---"

Just as Azu was about to finish her sentence, the sound of people rioting about could be heard. It came from near the entrance of the plaza, which meant the direction where Senri and the others were heading to.

"What's going on?"

Daisuke gazed at the end of the plaza, but couldn't see clearly of what was going on. Yet after taking a closer look, he was dumbfounded.

"...!"

The first thing he saw was some little red dots of light.

The flaring red dots flew onto a passerby's shoulder, causing him to fall into panic. Even though he was tapping the flame constantly off his shoulder, the flame wasn't extinguishing. The firefly-like flame began to erode the passerby's body as if it was burning through a piece of paper.

Those that were possessed by the burning flame dot gave distorted expressions filled with pain, and then bent down from sudden loss of strength.

--- *How can this be?!*

Daisuke's expression changed as he charged toward, while Azu was following behind, screaming

"D-Daisuke-kun!"

He then soon found the whereabouts of Senri and the others.

Both Iori and Akatsuki were kneeling on the floor with painful expression, while Senri was calling out to them perplexedly.

"Dai...Daisuke..."

Noticing Daisuke's arrival, Iori raised his head. On his arm that was supporting his body; a little cyan colored ant could be seen climbing up. The ant, which was possessed by the flaming dots, was struggling in pain.

"Dai-kun? ...! Iori-kun and Akatsuki-kun suddenly... ..."

With a face close to tears, Senri turned to face Daisuke.

"What happened?... ...?"

"I... don't know... We didn't do anything... Yet"

Akatsuki responded with a painful tone. Near his neck area, an orange colored mayfly that was on fire could also be seen.

"...!"

Daisuke suddenly dropped down to his knees, feeling powerlessness.

At the same time, a Kakkou Mushi was also dropped onto the floor from out of nowhere. The wings of Kakkou Mushi were eroding by the burning flame bit by bit.

Just then, Daisuke's vision blacked out.

---- The first image that he recalled during the black out, was the moment when he became a Mushitsuki. After that, his past memories began to surface one by one.

The figure of him being alone at an empty apartment. The encounter of him and Haji Keigo, Anmoto Shiika, Tachibana Rina, and finally ---- the reunion of him and Shiika.

"Dai...Dai-kun? Dai-kun!!"

After hearing the cry-like scream of Senri, Daisuke regained his consciousness.

She seemed to have noticed Daisuke's abnormal condition, and since her cane was dropped near Iori, Senri could only reach her hands outward timidly, trying to search for Daisuke.

Yet despite of her desperately calling out to Daisuke, she couldn't find him. Azu, whom was one step behind Daisuke, rushed to Iori and Akatsuki's side after arriving at the scene.

*Argh, that was close... Almost had my dreams completely devoured...*

Daisuke then surveyed his surroundings; although the number was low, there were still passersby kneeling on the ground. And those that were not affected were whispering to each other on the side.

"Dai-kun...! Everyone...!"

Seeing Senri who fell into a panic, Daisuke took a deep breath before shifting his gaze at the Kakkou Mushi that was struggling in pain on the ground, and said in a very low tone:

"... (Kakkou), get up."

The Kakkou Mushi immediately shot up its antennas.

*--- My dream will not end here just because of this, right?*

He told himself that.

Just then, the Kakkou Mushi stood up as well, and spread its wings outward with strength. Even though the ragging flame was still burning, it was able to climb up Daisuke's arm rather speedily.

Iori and Akatsuki gazed surprisedly at Daisuke who stood up as if it was nothing.

"Senri, don't worry. I'm fine."

Daisuke grabbed Senri's hand, pulling her closer to himself. Senri then exposed a relieved expression as she held Daisuke's hand tighter.

"Thank god. Dai-kun..... What happened? How are Iori-kun and Akatsuki-kun...?"

Aze held her rosary as she gazed over those two with a worried expression.

"Senri, are you okay? How do you feel?"

"I... actually wasn't feeling very well till then, but suddenly..."

Senri responded to Daisuke's question perplexedly.

Judging from the looks of those passersby that were lying on the ground, it seemed like they had temporarily passed out. Even though the damage was not fatal, it might still cause them to be unable to move freely for a short period of time if they didn't take a good rest.

*Ever since the past, there hasn't been any case where Senri's (Mushi) would devour the dreams of others so brutally like that.*

*Why is this happening----*

Daisuke shifted his gaze away from Senri whom was in his arms.

"... Dai-kun?"

Senri raised her head.

Yet, Daisuke didn't answer back.

Actually, he was unable to. Even though it only lasted for a moment, his mind had completely gone blank.

And the reason was because of a figure that appeared into his view.

That figure was wearing a ragged black robe, and even though his facial expression was covered by the hood, one could still see the sliver necklace that was hanging in front of his chest. The tip of the necklace originally seemed like a rosary, yet due to its horrible condition; it looked nothing more than a metal stick now.

Daisuke could feel goose bump all over his body, while his mouth was becoming dry, making it harder for him to breath.

Under the black hood, Daisuke could somewhat see that guy was showing a treacherous smile.

--- And then, Daisuke heard the sound of his rationality snapped.

"Azu..... Take care of Senri."

Daisuke didn't know whether he had said that or not, but when he came back to his sense, he had subconsciously pushed Senri to Azu who's on the side.

"Daisuke-kun?"

Starting with Azu, the gaze of all four began to fix on Daisuke.

Without saying anything else, Daisuke dashed out.

At the same time, the black robbed figure slipped into the alley.

"STOP!"

Daisuke sounded a loud roar that echoed throughout the plaza, causing the window glass of the café nearby to resonance and vibrate. Leaving behind Senri with a perplexed expression, he charged straight at the spot where the black robbed figure was standing.

Yet the figure from before had already disappeared. Turning around at the narrowed alley, he saw a dark shadow flash by at the end corner of the alley.

“..Tsk!”

Daisuke immediately charged straight through alley, and stopped at the end corner, however the black robbed figure was nowhere to be seen.

Looking ahead, the area behind the plaza seemed very much like an abandoned ruin. Due to the population shortage, the government had attempted on reviving the popularity of Housawa Town by building this area. However, due to failure of the project, this district was left abandoned; pretty much like a ghost-town.

The dark alley ahead was divided into more than four separate roads; Daisuke didn't know which one did the black robbed figure from before had fled to.

Just when Daisuke was deciding on charging in with intuition, his arm was suddenly grabbed by something.

He immediately reached his other hand into his shirt behind his back.

“Daisuke, calm down! It's me!”

After turning around and seeing the person who grabbed his arm was Iori, Daisuke let go of the metal object that he was holding onto in his shirt.

“Daisuke-kun... Why did you suddenly?...”

Following after Iori, Akatsuki rushed to Daisuke's side.

Daisuke clenched his teeth as he surveyed around.

“Till now, has Senri's (Mushi) ever devoured the dreams of others beside us?...”

Hearing Daisuke's question, Iori and Akatsuki exchanged glance with each other before saying:

“...No, I don't think so. By the way, before was actually the first time that it had devoured that much in one go...”

“It seems like Senri's (Mushi) has calmed down already...”

Senri's (Mushi) doesn't have a form of itself. It might have, but at least Daisuke had never seen it before, nor did Keigo.

“It might be because of that guy... What the hell is he trying to do Senri now...”

“Who is that “guy” you're talking about? Who were you chasing anyway?”



"I saw (Shinpu)."

Daisuke's words caused Akatsuki to widen his eyes.

"You mean... (The Original Three)'s...? It can't be! How's that possible?!"

"(Shinpu)...? Original what...? What are those, Could you explain them properly?"

"He is the prototype that can give birth to Special type Mushitsuki... Which means..."

With a disgusted tone, Daisuke continued:

"It was he who turned Senri into a Mushitsuki!"

Just then, Iori's expression immediately changed. Daisuke originally thought that he had dazed out from the shock, yet it was not the case. Iori's expression began to gradually distort from anger, before saying:

"It's all because of him that Senri had to suffer...? I'm going to fucking kill him...!"

"W-Wait a second! (The Original Three)'s (Shinpu) only appeared at most once per year, are you sure you aren't mistaken?"

"His appearance was exactly the same from what Intel had described... and"

"And?"

"... He was laughing. That guy was definitely laughing while looking at Senri."

Daisuke began to clench his fist tighter.

Perhaps because of the overwhelming rage that he was feeling, Daisuke could feel his chest burning up.

*--- Did you know how much she had to suffer because of you...?! And, how hard Haji worked in order to conceal her (Mushi)?!!... How dare you laugh at them like that!*

Daisuke hammered his fist against the wall furiously.

"Unforgivable... Only that guy, I can never..."

"Let's separate and look for him! Daisuke, tell me his characteristics!"

"A figure clothed in a black ragged robe with his face covered by a hood, a petite body, a crooked back... and last of all, he should be wearing a broken rosary."

The one who then answered Iori's question was Akatsuki.

"Those are the features listed in SEPB's database, am I right? Daisuke-kun."

Even though his tone was calm, Akatsuki's eyes that were staring directly at Daisuke's were completely different from his usual self; as if he had made up something in his mind from Daisuke's words before.

"Mhm."

"Let's go, whoever found him first contact the other two immediately."

Iori said with a sharp look, yet Daisuke immediately stopped them.

"No. If you find him, don't attack until I'm there. He is not someone that you guys can defeat by yourself."

Iori shot a glance at Daisuke without saying a word, and dashed out right afterward.

"Iori!"

Without even looking back, he disappeared at the end of the alley.

"Akatsuki."

Daisuke turned to look at Akatsuki.

"...Mmmm?..."

Akatsuki muttered with a low voice as his eyes flashed coldly. Only after seeing Daisuke frown, did he come back to his senses and flash a weak smile, yet his eyes were still icy.

"Don't worry about me, Daisuke-kun..... By the way, you're not supposed to engage in any battle in Housawa Town right? If you still treasure your dream, then you better listen to SEPB's order!"

After saying those words, Akatsuki dashed in an alley that was in the opposite direction of Iori.

Daisuke reached his hand into the back of his shirt, after confirming the existence of certain metal object, he stepped forward.

".... This is my resolve... I'm definitely going to defeat (The Original Three) ..."

Daisuke's murmur was then enveloped by the cold January wind that blew into the alley, before disappearing into space.

## The Others

On the southern end of Housawa Town, Akatsuki could be seen running along a paved road next to the river.

It seemed like Iori had probably gone searching the buildings around the train station, while Daisuke might have went to places where (Church) was witnessed. And judging from the place where Daisuke had stopped, the chances of (Shinpu) appearing near Akatsuki would be very high.

He stopped to take a break, while surveying his surrounding on a hill.

However, there wasn't any sign of any figure that matched (Shinpu)'s profile.

"Ugh....."

A sudden dizziness caused him to press his hand against his forehead. It seemed like the amount of dream that Senri's (Mushi) devoured was more than expected.

"Ah.... Ugh...!"

Within Akatsuki, who was giving a painful expression, many memories began to awaken like a flash.

Under the care of his gentle and prudent parents, he had lived a peaceful and happy childhood. However, that sort of life style had completely changed after a certain incident happened when Akatsuki was still in elementary school.

--- The forest had completely turned into a sea of flame.

The young Akatsuki at that time was speechlessly dumbfounded, gazing straight at the view that was colored by the golden sunset in before him. His body was dyed blood-red as his pupils reflected the human debris scattered around him.

The accident happened at a tropical rainforest that his family was passing through for their family trip.

For the purpose of plundering supplies from the traveling group that Akatsuki's family was with, an anti-government guerrilla organization had started a unilateral massacre. Most of the members from the travel group fell victim to the mines and grenades that was set up in advance, and was killed instantly on the spot and blown into pieces. The only one who survived through the incident was Akatsuki who was sheltered by his parents.

This incident was instantly reported and received a huge uproar from the public, which caused Akatsuki to become the focus of media attention. However, the public had become tired with such a topic, and soon forgot the incident. Meanwhile, Akatsuki was picked up and raised by his grandfather.

--- *I hate war.*

While living a peaceful life, a certain thought emerged in his heart.

*Why does the life of those good people have to get mercilessly taken away?*

Akatsuki had never told anyone about his past, simply because he felt that there was no point in talking about it. Not to mention he had already forgot the pain of losing his parents.

No actually, Akatsuki had only told his dream and thoughts to this one person before.

"Ughh.....!"

A face of a teenage girl flashed through Akatsuki's mind.

It was about one year ago on the day of the Moira high school's entrance exam. Right after Akatsuki finished taking the exam; he took a bus to head home. But on the way, the bus almost collided into an out-of-control truck. Under such emergency, Akatsuki could only use his (Mushi) to prevent the accident from occurring. However, due to the resulting blockage caused by the truck lying to its side in the middle of the road, the bus could not move at all.

--- Hey, could you tell me, what is your dream?

Sitting in the farthest seat at the back of the bus, a teenage girl who was sitting across from Akatsuki suddenly asked.

It was a moment that Akatsuki could never forget in his life.

Under the gaze of the sunset, the unprecedented beautiful girl was smiling at Akatsuki. While on her shoulder, an out-of-season ladybug could be seen. It was the first time that Akatsuki was attracted to the opposite sex.



The teenage girl explained that she came from afar to take the entrance exam of Moira high school. She also said that she had originally intended to take the bus heading to the Housawa train station, but accidentally took the wrong one. And since there was plenty of time, the teenage girl chatted with Akatsuki for a while.

--- Your dream is pretty good!

The teenage girl praised with a frivolous tone, and revealed a bright smile.

--- It's a nice dream!

After knowing the teenage girls's dream, Akatsuki smiled as well.

And after taking a break from the chatting, the two of them shifted their gaze at the sunset that was giving off a golden glow from within the bus.

--- If I could enjoy the sunset like this every day, how nice would it be.

Yet compared to the sunset itself, the glow of this teenage girl was more attractive to Akatsuki. Just by staring at her profile, it would make him feel that; if her dream was to come true, it would definitely not because of other's help. She was the complete opposite of Akatsuki. Filled a strong will, she seemed like the type of person that would go against a fierce gale, and still able to overcome it. Akatsuki believed that someday, she would definitely fulfill her dream.

Akatsuki wanted to offer his help on fulfilling the teenage girl's dream, yet was turned down. The teenage girl said that her dream would go against Akatsuki's dream. However, Akatsuki still forcefully made a promise with her.

--- Being able to meet you, was truly wonderful.

Facing the teenage girl who was shaking his hand while saying that, Akatsuki revealed a wry smile because those were the words he wanted to say as well.

He wanted to protect this person.

Akatsuki was very sure that, this teenage girl would definitely fulfill her dream one day. Her dream is his own dream, so Akatsuki had vowed to protect her at all cost.

However ---

Not so long ago, Akatsuki heard the news of her passing away in a battle.

Ever since his parents died, he had never cried so miserably.

And that day, since Iori and Azu had things to do, Akatsuki had to walk Senri home. Before that, Akatsuki couldn't feel any sense of realism of the teenage girl passing away. However, when he caught a glimpse

of the sunset on the way of walking Senri home, he subconsciously expressed the suppressed feelings that was stored within him.

--- Akatsuki-kun, are you crying?

Senri noticed Akatsuki's hand, which was holding onto hers, was trembling and so she asked. Yet Akatsuki didn't respond, and just merely shed silent tears.

Before he finished crying, Senri didn't speak at all, she just merely held tightly onto his hand.

Yet when he felt a teardrop fall onto his hand, he stopped crying. As he raised his head and turned around, he saw a trace of tear of Senri's face.

--- Sorry, I was thinking about comforting you with a smile... but if Akatsuk-kun is crying, I just can't do it...

And so Akatsuki had vowed again within his heart.

He would never bear this pain again. Just merely crying without doing anything else, would not solve anything.

No matter what--- this time he would definitely protect... this teenage girl that couldn't reflect anything in her eyes despite her being shined upon by the sunset.

He would definitely protect this girl who's kinder than anyone else.

"Ugh..."

Akatsuki finally restored parts of his consciousness. After seeing a droplet of water near his feet, he then realized that he was weeping, and quickly used his sleeve to wipe his face.

Shaking his head left and right to awaken himself more, Akatsuki began his search for (Shinpu).

--- *I will definitely protect Senri!*

Even now, Akatsuki could feel his hands were very warm. The warmth that he received from those two teenage girls would never fade from him, no matter what happens.

Akatsuki began to run once again, heading straight towards a certain place.

He soon arrived at an abandoned factory near the river bank, and charged in without hesitation. Gliding down the hill and passing through the rusted giant gate, he entered the ruined factory.

Judging from within, it seemed like it was once a vehicle repair factory, even though it had already been abandoned, many rusted cars could still be seen around. Akatsuki then passed through a chest-high iron-wire fence and walked deeper into the factory.

"...!"

Just then, several (Mushi) that were larger than Akatsuki, appeared out of nowhere, and blocked his path. Wiggling their mouth parts, they were all groaning lightly as if they wanted to devour Akatsuki alive.

"What business does SEPB's dog have to do here? Have you come to arrest us?"

A voice filled with sarcasm came from behind the (Mushi).

Looking carefully, one could see that there were more than a dozen figures appearing all over within the factory. They were teenagers that had no uniform relationship to each other in regards of their appearance and age.

*--- The number has increased?*

After seeing some new faces, Akatsuki's expression immediately became serious.

"I have something I want to ask everyone. It doesn't matter how small the details are, if you know anything, please tell me."

Akatsuki said that after hesitated for a while.

However, the (Mushi) in front immediately sounded an angry roar as the teenagers surrounded Akatsuki in a semi-circle. After seeing a blonde haired teenage boy walked out among them, Akatsuki gave a distorted expression in shock.

"Why are you still acting like you're the boss? I thought that after (Ladybird) died, you... had already defected to the SEPB like a traitor!"

"Vihookumosu...! Why is the western district leader... you... here?!" [TL note: Vihookumosu is the Jap word for Bee hawk moth, a moth that looks like a humming bird.]

"It's all because you, the southern leader, are being so useless that I had to come here for your disturbed underlings."

The blonde haired teenage boy --- Vihookumosu stared at Akatsuki. He was a teenage boy taller than Akatsuki by a head, and had a strong body figure.

Akatsuki then muttered with a low voice:

"... I'm sure you have already known, the reason of why I'm in SEPB right now is because of Rina's order. It's not like I volunteered to do it."

"Oui, Efemera!" [TL note: Efemera is the Jap word for Mayfly/Ephemera.]

Vihookumosu strengthened his tone as he tugged Akatsuki's collar.

"It's not 'Rina', right? Our leader is the (Ladybird)... It's all because of you, the southern leader, had no will to fight that our west division couldn't go assist her, and that's why she...!"



After hearing that, everyone began to distort their expression painfully due to remorse; as a strong pain pierced through Akatsuki's heart.

Just like what Vihookumosu said, he didn't save Rina. However, there was actually a reason behind it. It may sound like an excuse, but he did indeed follow the promise between him and Rina, that's why he didn't go.

"... The reason why I didn't go to Ouka City was also because of Rina's order ---"

Before Akatsuki could finish, his face received a strong impact.

Vihookumosu punched Akatsuki against the wall, and furthermore choked his neck. Their comrades immediately tried to break them off, yet due to the teenager's ridiculous strength; no one was able to stop him.

"Don't make me repeat myself! She's (Ladybird), not Rina!"

"A figure clothed in a black ragged robe with his face covered by a hood, a petite body, a crooked back... and he should be wearing a broken rosary..."

"Huh?"

"If anyone... has seen this person in this town, please tell me..."

This time, Akatsuki's stomach received an even stronger impact, causing him to groan before falling forward onto the floor.

"No one will listen to your shit!"

"Please tell me... has anyone seen...? Anyone?---"

Even though Akatsuki held his pain and raised his head to see, no one responded nor moved an inch. Just then, Vihookumosu stepped on Akatsuki's profile.

"Ugh!"

"You're really pissing me off...!"

The blonde haired boy then added few more kicks to Akatsuki who was on the ground before saying:

"After joining (Mushibane), you had never once fought in any battle! And even when (Ladybird) was going for her final battle, you didn't even think about saving her! Why does a coward person like you get to be the southern district leader?! It's all because of you... all because of you that (Ladybird) was killed by (Kakkou)...!"

Enduring the pain, Akatsuki shot a glance at Vihookumosu and noticed that he was crying while kicking him harshly. On the side, other comrades could be seen crying as well.

"(Kakkou)---"

Akatsuki squeezed out that line forcefully, which caused the teenage boy who was expressing his anger to stop.

"I'm definitely going to kill that guy... No matter whom he is, no matter how strong he is... I'm definitely going to get revenge... using my own hands."

Akatsuki said with a suppressed low tone, before raising his head to look at Vihookumosu and noticed that shoulders were trembling from shock. Akatsuki didn't know what expression was he putting up, but those words were exactly his feelings from the bottom of his heart. No matter what reason that guy might have, he will never forgive (Kakkou), whose face that he had never seen before, for killing Rina.

Akatsuki slowly stood up and surveyed the surroundings. A silence began to embrace the whole factory, it seemed like no one had the Intel that Akatsuki wanted.

With a mouth filled with the taste and smell of blood, Akatsuki turned around and planned on leaving. Yet suddenly, Vihookumosu spoke:

"Someone like you can defeat (Kakkou)? Don't make me laugh. According to the Intel, aren't you the lowest ranked level in SEPB? I guess you're trying to hide the fact that you're weak as hell just so you don't have to fight right?"

Akatsuki didn't answer. Beside himself, there were many others within (Mushibane) that collected Intel on the SEPB.

"My west division will take all your southern division's members under our control from now on, and also decided to put this town under our territory. No one is going to follow you anymore."

"What?! Who gave you the permission to ---"

"And I heard that the SEPB's East Central Division branch director's younger sister is here as well. We're going to catch her as a hostage, and then take (Fuyuhotaru) back. Well of course, that's after we finished with that annoying branch director and (Kakkou).

Akatsuki widened his eyes.

"How did you know such thing...?!"

"It's not like you're the only one that's lurking within the SEPB, you know? It was just an Intel that someone obtained by chance."

*How can that be...!*

Akatsuki shouted within his mind.

The fact that the younger sister of Haji Keigo, the East Central Division's branch director, was a Mushitsuki— was top secret Intel that none other than: Haji Keigo, the West Southwest director, and Akatsuki himself, who was the watcher for the mission, should know of. This sort of Intel could never be obtained just by "chance". However it didn't seem as if Vihookumosu was lying.

*Then How... Who is it that ---*

An indescribable foreboding rose within Akatsuki's heart, causing him to shout:

"You can't!"

Seeing the sudden change in Akatsuki's expression, everyone else was shocked.

"I won't allow you guys to do such thing!"

"We don't need your consent on this! The members of West district division had already gathered in town. Beside, why are you so fussed over this?"

"Because... because it would be unilaterally threatening and that would cause us troubles! We had only been protecting others Mushitsuki in the past, that's why SEPB are being loose with us. If we were to do that, the SEPB would definitely go all out and destroy the (Mushibane)!"

"Our leader has already died! Are we just going to hide in our corners and cry like cowards?! The death of (Ladybird) has not moved you any bit?! Not only did you not protect (Ladybird), are you going defend for the enemies as well?!"

"...!"

The teenage boy's words caused an indescribable pain to throb against Akatsuki's chest.

*I --- I couldn't protect Rina...*

He couldn't protect that teenage girl whom he met one year ago.

--- I wanted to create a place where Mushitsuki belong.

He really wanted to help her with her dream that she said with such a strong will, and that feeling hadn't changed a bit, even now. But after knowing she passed away, he could feel that everything he had believed in had collapsed.

The teenage girl named Tachibana Rina was a very important figure that should never have died. Her goal contained many Mushitsukis' hopes. Not only did Akatsuki respect her, he could feel that he was developing some special feelings for her as well.

However, a death god known as war used (Kakkou) as his sickle to mercilessly take her life away from them.

In this world, the thing that Akatsuki hated the most was war. And Rina, who was trying to free others from pain, was a victim of it. This fact caused Akatsuki to grieve dramatically, as if he was betrayed by everything in this world.

Just then, a teenage girl cried for him, saving his soul from being overwhelmed by sadness and anger. A person that was not related to the SEPB, or (Mushibane). But just as a friend, she cried along with Akatsuki.

"In short..... You can't, I definitely won't allow such a thing to happen."

Akatsuki said as he stared at Vihookumosu, while the feeling of uncertainty began to expand within.

"I'm not going to listen to your orders! If you treasure SEPB more than (Mushibane), then why don't you just go join them?! So that way, we can defeat you without hesitating."

"..."

After he exchanged glares with Vihookumosu, Akatsuki bit his lip and turned away from his former comrades.

"Efemera! Don't forget, it's you that killed (Ladybird)!"

Vihookumosu shouted behind Akatsuki's back, causing him to clench his fist tightly.

--- Your dream is pretty good!

He then recalled Rina's smile.

Remembering the moment when Rina praised his dream and her words:

--- You're really kind... If someone like you could become the leader of (Mushibane). (Mushibane) would probably be able to stay the way it is. As long as you continued to protect your dream...

Rina trusted Akatsuki. Yet he was unable to return that trust and further protect her dream.

And even now, he had thought of protecting someone else.

"That's right... It was my dream... that killed Rina..."

The confusion emerged from within Akatsuki's heart began to expand wider and wider without a slightest sign of weakening.

## The Others

In the maze-like ghost town, lori continued running.

In front of him, he could see a construction site where many businesses had worked together on, in the past. However, as the project was scrapped halfway, the place was abandoned.

After arriving at the deserted shopping district of the ghost town, lori stopped running.

The shopping district was filled with partially built shops, and many other buildings with only their rooftops' frames set up.

Since lori had already searched the vicinity for more than an hour already, he knew the figure named (Shinpu) probably wasn't here. After having a quick look around, he could see many homeless people sleeping on top of their plastic sheets, along with some teenagers drinking playfully.

"Ugh...!"

Suddenly, he felt a sense of haziness, which caused him to press his hand against his forehead.

*Is this the after-effect from the time when Senri's (Mushi) ate my dream? Although I had experienced it before... but that last time was the first time that it had devoured this much.*

lori used his hand to support himself and laughed subconsciously.

After seeing the figures of those teens that were gazing at him with nonchalant looks, he began to recall his past memories.

However, despite it being his past memories, it was nothing more than things that happened to him merely one year earlier, yet lori felt as if it was something that happened long ago.

This shopping district was the place where lori met Senri for the first time.

At the time, lori was still in junior high, and was pretty much the same as those teens gazing at him... No actually, if they were spending their time drinking here, then they were much better off than him was. Because lori had, in the past, committed crimes back at his hometown.

Back then, lori felt everything was boring to him.

He was strong ever since he was little; hence he liked to use violence to solve every problem. He abused the weaklings, blackmailed many others, and even formed gang-like parties to hang out with on the streets. Although he was often caught by the police, due to him being only 15 at the time, he was always released before things got messier. This only caused his behavior to worsen.

It was probably starting from that point on that lori was dominated by impatience and overwhelming boredom. Just when it was the end of his compulsory education period, the pleasure of using violence to solve everything was gradually fading. Every time he used violence to solve problems, he would be enveloped by a sense of impatience. Even his parents had given up trying to correct him, while those that were around him kept on trying to please him. The only one that had never changed their attitude towards him was probably his childhood friend, the teenage girl named Sunakozaka Azu.

Thinking back on it, the one that lori hurt the most was probably Azu, right? He sometimes even hit Azu for scolding at him. And because of the relationship between them, all of the other female classmates distanced themselves from Azu. Whenever lori went to school, she was always by herself.

--- Who... is it?

It happened during the winter of his third year in junior high.

In order to get rid of the boredom and anger stored within him, lori started a war against the leading gang of Housawa Town. However, because his "comrades" betrayed him, he ended up being beat up alone. Perhaps the animosity that built up against him was too deep --- every single one of his former "comrades" were laughing happily while beating him up. At the moment he realized he had been betrayed, he stopped resisting.

Immediately after that, as he was lying badly injured on the ground of the shopping district, a teenage girl appeared. She seemed to be around same age as him, and it seemed like she was lost and arrived there by mistake. She was a cane-holding girl that looked well educated — like a princess from a rich family.

The tip of her cane ran into lori, which caused her to turn her head defenselessly towards him.

The innocent act of the teenage girl pissed lori off, so he pushed her away.

After watching the figure of teenage girl search for her cane anxiously after she fell on the floor, lori then realized she was blind.

He thought to himself:

How could such weakling exist? If it was his usual self, lori would definitely trample on her pride and mercilessly ridicule her.

After the teenage girl found her cane, she quickly walked away. lori thought she had fled.

Raindrops began to fall as he thought self-deprecatingly to himself that it was fine if he were to die like that, and just when he was about to close his eyes ---

Something knocked against his head again.

--- Sorry... No one was willing to listen to me... So I could only come back by myself...

Upon opening his eyes, he saw the teenage girl from before standing by his side.

*Unbelievable.*

The teenage girl had actually left to try and get help for him... Yet no one bothered listening to her or even tried to call an ambulance for her...

Even though the teenage girl's action surprised lori, what surprised him most was the fact that there wasn't anyone willing to listen to this weak girl's plea. Then he realized, he was no better than those people, in fact, he actually was the one who did the cruelest thing to her. lori could not help but feel shocked.

And then, the teenage girl did something else that was even more unbelievable.

Throwing away her cane, she supported the injured lori on her back and gradually walked forward.

With her fragile body that was likely to collapse even without the rain, she almost used all her strength to carry him after a few miles. She had even coughed a few times, while breathing painfully.

However, the teenage girl did not stop; she continued to carry him and to move onward.

*--- Stop ---!*

lori cursed at the teenage girl with malicious remarks, and even made fun of how weak she was.

The teenage girl felt so hurt from his words that tears began to flow down her cheeks...

Even so, she continued to carry lori. Despite her tripping many times, and despite her tears and emotional hurt from lori's mockery, she continued to move forward.

*--- Please... Stop...*

After tripping over, she began to cough once again. However, this time she was coughing very severely; even her expression was distorted by pain. When a thought of the teenage girl dying along with him surfaced within his mind, an indescribable fear enveloped lori completely.

And before he knew, he was already shouting.

Using all his remaining strength, he shouted desperately for help with such loud voice, one that he had not once used ever since he was born.

Anyone would be fine, he just hoped that someone would hear his voice and come save this girl. He didn't care about what would happen to him; even dying there alone was fine, as long as this teenage girl could be saved ----

lori didn't even realize he was crying as he screamed desperately.

--- When a passerby heard his voice and came for help, the teenage girl had already passed out.

After leaving the hospital, the first thing lori did was to search for this teenage girl.

He spent a few days searching aimlessly on the streets of Housawa Town, until he finally found the person he was looking for in front of Moira high school. She seemed to be there for the application form of the school. Knowing she was fine, lori was relieved.

lori then thought to himself.

*--- In the end, what the hell am I?*

Using violence to hurt those around him, and then being betrayed by those who feared him. Not to mention he was rescued by this weak girl.

Just when he was blaming himself, a voice suddenly came from behind him.

--- Hey, could you tell me your dream?

lori didn't turn around. He knew from the bottom of his heart that his mind was being attracted to the voice. It was only after hearing from Akatsuki, that he found out that the woman who was talking to him was actually (Oogui), one of the rumored originals that could give birth to Mushitsuki.

--- A dream that has just formed... Your dream seems really delicious!

If it was him in the far past, he probably wouldn't be able to answer the woman's question. But the lori at that moment could clearly say it without hesitation:

--- I want to protect that girl.

To protect her from those heartless people like him, away from all sorts of danger that might hurt her. No matter what it takes for him to fulfill that goal; even if Senri didn't need him, was fine. He just hoped that, before this girl found her most precious person, he could protect her properly.

That was lori's only dream.

"Hey, have you guys seen anyone dressed in a ragged black robe? His head should probably be covered by a hood"

lori shook his head and asked in a normal tone to the group of teenagers in front.

The teens exchanged gazes between each other and grinned. lori thought they were going to walk closer to him; however they were just checking him out thoroughly with contemplating eyes.

"So... have you seen him or not?"



A teen then began to give lori a shakedown, and searched through all of lori's clothing; He remained silent as the teen took his wallet out to show everyone else.

“Okay, Bou-chan, how much do you have in your wallet?”

“If its money that you want, I’ll pay. Just tell me, have you seen him or not,”

Another teen slammed lori’s shoulder while saying in a militant manner:

“Huh? Who you think you are?!”

lori understood these types of people better than anyone else. lori sighed as he turned around; it seemed like they hadn't seen (Shinpu) as well.

“Wait a second, what is this?”

lori turned around because his shoulder was being pulled forcefully, and saw the teen was holding his coin filled wallet up high. They obviously were unsatisfied with the amount in the wallet.

lori sighed again. Even though he didn’t want to make too many enemies in Senri's hometown, if he were to punch them a few times, they probably wouldn’t bother him any further, right?

Just as lori began to have that thought, he noticed the expressions of the teens suddenly change.

Following their gaze, lori turned around to take a look.

“...!”

From darkness of the shopping district, figures that looked like insects began to appear. Insects that had bodies close to the size of humans began to close up on lori.

“(Mushi)!!”

“Woahhh!”

The teens behind lori were screaming loudly as they fled in panic. Even the hobos that were sleeping at a distance had done the same.

Even though Japanese government had been denying the existence of (Mushi), the rumors had already spread like an unstoppable forest fire; and also due to the media uproar about them, the fear of (Mushi) had already deeply rooted itself into the general public’s hearts. While those Mushitsuki that were infested by the (Mushi) were feared and further discriminated.

Facing five (Mushi) in front, lori flashed a grin as he bent down to pick up his wallet that had fallen on the ground. On the top of his hand, a cyan colored ant that appeared out of nowhere could be seen.

“Judging from the timing, I believe you guys are after me huh? ... In other words, you guys might be related to that bastard called (Shinpu), right?!”

(Mushi) that were different in shapes and size began to close the distance between themselves and lori.

“(Hekihei)!”

In response to lori’s call, the ant that jumped down on the ground began to swell its body.

Shortly after, a giant cyan ant that was covered in plate-like shells appeared in front lori.

“First of all, I’ll take you all out! And then take my time finding out where he is.”

The cyan soldier ant charged straight at them as lori said that.

The battle between (Mushi) had begun.

A flying insect brutally bit onto the soldier ant as a beetle charged straight at it from its side, using its sharp claws to slash against it. While up above, a butterfly was releasing a large amount of burning powder onto it. However, none of these attacks worked against the soldier ant’s tank-like shell. The ant forcefully shook its head, and tore the body of the flying insect into two.

Meanwhile, a worm that was crawling underground and an arthropod that was wiggling its countless feet, were charging straight at lori.

The soldier ant immediately returned to lori’s side and bit onto a piece of concrete cement that was protruding up from the ground. After pulling the whole piece out along with the worm, it then swung its head and threw both the cement and worm against the arthropod.

And then a big collapsing noise sounded after that.

The partially built store began to collapse, as if it had suffered a huge explosion as the figures of both (Mushi) disappeared in the smoke.

The soldier ant then twitched its body in joy as it faced the sky and gave a howl.

At that instant, lori felt something within him was disappearing as a sense of powerlessness enveloped him completely, causing him to feel drowsy.

However, lori faced it with a proud laugh.

“(Hekihei), eat as much as you like! My dream hasn’t even decreased one single bit!”

The soldier ant then defeated the other (Mushi) with its overwhelming strength; its destructive power did not decrease at all.

*As long as Senri still lives, my dream will never end ---!*

The unilateral massacre was over in the blink of an eye. However, lori then realized that something was wrong.

“He is... not here?”

Through the eyes of Iori who muttered about, he didn't see any sign of people in the area.

Even though there were (Mushi), he couldn't see any Mushitsuki that was supposed to be their host around.

“What the hell is going on.....?”

Just when Iori was deep in thought, the five enemies that surrounded (Hekihei) were defeated in an instant. The (Mushi) that slopped out green liquids all around them began to disappear, as if they were melting away in the air.

“...!”

Just then, Iori felt a strong presence above him. Raising his head, he saw a giant beetle was falling down upon him.

“(Hekihei)!”

The cyan soldier ant immediately leapt towards the beetle in midair and bit it before throwing it onto the side with force.

The giant beetle was about three times bigger than the soldier ant. After being thrown to the side, the giant beetle immediately stood up and charged straight at Iori, but the soldier ant appeared in its path and bit onto it.

Their bodies remained motionless as they expressed their strength onto each other, one might have even thought that they were even in terms of power. However, shortly after, the beetle's body gradually began to be lifted up into the air.

The soldier ant then bit tightly onto the beetle before smashing it against the ground a few times, causing earthquake like shockwaves to rumble throughout the shopping district. The shells of the giant beetle scattered all over as it screeched in pain.

Just then, the sound of something falling could be heard.

Looking at the source of the noise, one could see there was someone lying at the corner of empty house. The figure's whole body was covered in a brown colored coat, while his face was covered entirely by a huge set of goggles.

Iori walked closer to the figure that was lying on the ground.

“..... web?”

The coat-wearing figure's entire body was wrapped in a large amount of a transparent web-like substance. Iori tried to touch them, but the webs immediately disappeared as if they were an illusion.

And since the goggles on the figure's face had fallen off a bit when he landed, lori was able to see his pair of eyes that were slightly opened, with pupils that were akin to those that had passed away. Upon seeing this, lori could not help but feel goose bumps appearing all over him.

--- He was probably the host of those (Mushi) that lori defeated earlier on, right? Even though he was still breathing, which proved that he was still alive, he was staring at lori motionlessly—like a lifeless doll.

*So this is a Fallen huh...*

Those Mushitsuki that lost their (Mushi) would lose every emotion and dream they had and become "Fallen". And Fallen would not even have any self-will; they will only obey others' commands. Such an end didn't really count as being alive.

After hearing the roar of the soldier ant, lori came back to his senses.

With overwhelming strength, lori's (Mushi) eliminated every single enemy.

After becoming a Mushitsuki, whenever lori saw his (Mushi), he would always have this feeling that --- He was actually just a tiny ant that was crawling on the ground.

However, he had things he wanted to protect; and it was because of this feeling that he stood up to fight, stood up against others in order to protect.

His end would probably be no different than this figure in front of him, either he would turn into a fallen or die after his (Mushi) had fully devoured his dream.

However, it didn't matter what end awaited him, lori had already made up his mind. In order to protect Senri, he didn't care what would happen to him.

But ---

Within lori's mind, the image of his childhood friend Azu that grew up along with him appeared.

The teenage girl who had never changed her attitude towards him, and always worried over him that liked to make enemies. lori knew that he had been ignoring her kindness, disregarding her advice, and then hurting her for trying to help himself, even going as far as pretending he hadn't realized her feelings.

What would Azu think of lori who wanted to protect Senri?

In the past, Azu had always believed in lori despite him doing all sorts of bad things, yet what could he do for her?

Breathing out a blow of white mist, lori gazed silently at his (Mushi) hoping to find an answer, yet he was unable to find any.

After running out of the plaza, Daisuke arrived at the outskirts of the town.

He intended to go to the places where (Church) was reported to have been sighted. Although he had already visited those places immediately after he arrived at Housawa, and could not find anything; those places were Daisuke's only clues as to (Shinpu)'s whereabouts.

“(Shinpu)...”

Daisuke clenched his fists as he ran, while the feeling of rage was spread wildly within him.

(Shinu)... The culprit who turned the frail Senri into a Mushitsuki — as a result Haji had to enter the Special Environmental Preservation Bureau in order to protect her. He is the bastard that caused the siblings to be in such deep pain, and has thrown their futures into a bloody hell. That's why Daisuke could never forgive (Shinpu)

A gust of wind suddenly roared past.

Daisuke raised his arm to shield himself from the incoming dust.

Just as he lowered his arm to look ahead once more, he noticed that the atmosphere around him had suddenly changed. It felt as if he was floating in the air.

The sound of a bicycle and the wind, which he could hear before, fell into complete silence. Even though the surrounding scenery was still that of a quiet residential area, it felt like it came directly from a dream.

Daisuke shifted his gaze to his side, and immediately widened his eyes.

In the once empty and open space, a strange building suddenly appeared out of nowhere. At the center of the vast hinterland, a tree could be seen standing, and behind the tree, there was a black colored building with a pointed roof; and above the broken roof, a beam with a broken tip still stood.

A clear bell sound suddenly rang throughout the surrounding.

The sound resounded through the residential area like ripples, and then dispersed into the air. The air surrounding Daisuke suddenly gained a disgusted feeling — as if they were polluted by the sound.

Daisuke changed his expression as he reached his hand behind his back.

“Trying to seduce me?... Just what I wanted!”

From the holster that was inside of his shirt, he took out his revolver and goggles. He then placed the icy cold goggles over his head. The pair of goggles was common equipment given to the SPEB members.

Even though it could cover one's whole face, its weight was actually very light since it was made from a special refined alloy. In addition, the goggles had a variety of different functions.

After turning the channel button near his ear, the word "Locked" appeared on the lens of the goggles. It seemed like the wireless connection was blocked for some reason.

He then took out his cell phone and looked at the screen; the screen displayed "No Signal".

"....."

Without any hesitation, Daisuke walked closer to the (Church) as he unlocked the safety lock on his automatic revolver. He then touched his goggles once again and pressed a few buttons; the lens of the goggle was now showing the letters "REC" on its side. As a member of the East Central Division, he was required record his battles whenever possible.

Daisuke Ignored the overgrown tree, and went inside the (Church), which had its doors wide open.

Immediately after he stepped in, the doors violently shut behind him with a loud sound.

The bell then rang once again from above.

The internal design of the building was rather outdated. Wooden benches could be seen arranged in a neatly organized fashion; while lighted candles, which were hanging on the walls, surrounded the benches.

And at the center of this windowless church, there stood an empty altar. On the spot that was originally made for the statue was empty as well, while the candles on both side of it were wavering non-stop.

"'tis true, there be a fellow with sins so grave..."

A voice suddenly sounded, causing Daisuke to raise his revolver.

"You..... thou have committed countless sins...for the sake of thy dream..."

Although Daisuke could hear the voice, he couldn't see the owner of it.

Daisuke advanced towards the center of the Chapel and surveyed the surroundings.

"(Shinpu), come out!"

Daisuke shouted:

"Didn't you have enough after you turned Senri into Mushitsuki?!Why are you still clutching onto her?!"

Just then, the voice that came from an unknown direction spoke again:

"I am merely here for the bewildered ones; granting them the salvation they oh-so-crave..."

"Salvation? Why would Senri need your salvation now?!"

"Thine eyes have become turbid from all the atrocities which thou hast committed... Ye hast not seen the truth...

"I don't need the truth! I'm fine with only seeing the enemies through my eyes."

Daisuke said that as he began to doubt.

--- *Could it be that (Shinpu)'s target is not Senri?...*

According to what the owner of the voice said, that seemed to be the case.

If what Daisuke thought was true, then there's another problem. (The Original Three) would only appear when they were lured by human's dream. If (Shinpu)'s target was not Senri, then who else might it be? In this Housawa Town, aside from Senri, who else had he set his eyes on?

"This place of prayer lies within my territory... Repent! ... All ye who are tainted by thy sins..."

(Shinpu)'s voice resounded again.

Daisuke continued to put up an alerted stance. Regardless of what (Shinpu)'s intentions might be, the most important thing right now is to catch him. Presumably, (Shinpu) must have felt Daisuke would obstruct him, that's why he deliberately lured Daisuke into this abnormal dimension which he controlled at free will.

--- Kusuriya.

Daisuke suddenly heard a familiar voice, causing him to turn around...

At the center of the empty church, a teenage girl appeared out of nowhere.

With her shoulder-long hair, slender limbs, and beautiful face that one might have hard time averting their gaze from; she was gazing straight at Daisuke.

It was Tachibana Rina --- A Mushitsuki girl that passed away in Daisuke's arms not so long ago.

"..."

Daisuke stared silently at Rina as more figures began to appear around her. Daisuke knew those people as well; they were the people who had their dream deprived by him.

--- Why didn't you save me? I also had the same dream as you...

While saying that, Rina suddenly vanished and reappeared behind Daisuke as she tightly embraced Daisuke from behind with her slender arms. However, all Daisuke could feel was her icy cold body temperature.

Meanwhile, those that had become ghosts were increasing in numbers; they almost filled up the whole church. They were all bleeding non-stop as they reached their hand at Daisuke.

---For the sake of saving yourself... Kusuriya, for the sake of protecting your own dream, you killed us...

Rina's hands reached for Daisuke's neck; with an unbelievable strength, she began to strangle Daisuke.

However, Daisuke silently raised his revolver to aim at her and others figures that were clutching onto him desperately.

A clear gunfire sounded.

At the same time, those ghost-like figures began to explode like balloons, before disappearing into the space without leaving a trace.

"..."

Daisuke coldly shifted his gaze around at his surroundings; however, he still couldn't find the figure of (Shinpu). He also tried to look for an exit, but it seemed like if he wanted to escape this windowless church, he had to leave through the door which he entered.

--- Daisuke...

A voice suddenly rang throughout.

Lowering his head, he saw a female kneeling on the ground, holding tightly onto a young girl in her arms.

--- You're actually a Mushitsuki? How terrify... It was right to abandon you after all...

It was Daisuke's mother and older sister that abandoned him when he was young.

"Is it because of the fact that I do not know how my mother and sis currently look like, that you could only show their figures from the past?...Judging from this, you seem to have the capability to dig out the memories of those who enter this (Church)..."

Daisuke murmured as he aimed his revolver at his mother and older sister.

Another loud gunshot sounded as those two figures exploded before disappearing.

"Ohh... How couldst you do such things to thy family... Such a terrible demon..."

Daisuke threw this line at the trembling voice:

"Whether it's Rina's voice or other's voice, I have always heard them in my dream every day. Do you think that I would be shaken just by hearing these voices now?"

Daisuke's hands were dyed bright red from these figures' blood. He had already deprived many people of their dreams; and all of that was for the sake of fulfilling his own. Nevertheless, he had never once forgotten how wayward his actions were.

Even so, he must fulfill his dream no matter what.



To find a place that needs him, a place where he belongs --- In order to fulfill this tiny dream, he had lived up to now.

“I never intended on praying to god, nor wanted forgiveness from those that I deprived dreams of. Even if I become a devil, I will definitely fulfill my dream. I will also defeat you, (The Original Three), and extract from you three the method of reverting Mushitsuki back into ordinary humans!”

Daisuke threw his spiteful words at (Shinpu) as he raised the hand that was holding the revolver.

“(Kakkou)!”

A green Kakkou Mushi appeared out of nowhere and landed on the tip of the revolver. It then emerged itself into the revolver, releasing many green tentacles to fuse with Daisuke’s arm.

*--- Who would listen to your fucking order--- Right now it’s my best chance to take down (Shinpu).*

“The one who proclaims himself as god! Where else would you be cowering other than here?!”

Daisuke input more force onto his revolver, before aiming it at the altar. Flaming sparks resulting from bullet being violently rotated were spraying out from the mouth of the revolver that had already fused with the Kakkou Mushi. Daisuke’s surrounding was enveloped by these roaring flames.

“Go to hell---!”

Just when Daisuke was about to pull the trigger, a sudden change appeared before him.

At the direction of altar which he was aiming at, a teenage girl appeared. Her short hair and her familiar coat were swaying from the gust that the revolver created.

Then teenage girl shifted her gaze straight at Daisuke.

“Shi---”

His finger that was going to pull the trigger immediately came to a stop.

--- Dai-kun...

Next to Shiika, another teenage girl appeared.

“Senri...”

As if they were seeking for help, they reached their hands toward Daisuke.

The antennae of the Kakkou Mushi that had fused with the revolver were wavering as if it could feel the confusion within Daisuke’s heart. The soaring flames from the mouth of the revolver were also decreasing significantly.

“What shall thou do... ye devil's son?...”

(Shinpu)'s voice rang again.

Following after (Shinpu)'s words, a large number of figures suddenly appeared from the ground, charging straight at Daisuke. They were the people who he had deprived dreams of in the past.

“Ugh...Ahhhh!”

Their overwhelming weights were adding onto Daisuke one after another as their screams vibrated violently against his eardrums, crushing his mind with an unbearable pain.

His consciousness was completely overturned as if every sense he had was cut off.

In a world where one couldn't feel any of their five senses, Daisuke was surrounded by a peaceful atmosphere.

Nothing was around him.

There was only darkness, and a strange sense of comfort.

He couldn't hear the blame from the others; he also didn't know what he needed.

--- Ugh...

This space was so comfortable that he couldn't ask for anything else, nor would he feel any censures.

Daisuke thought dazedly to himself... Perhaps, he had died already?...

--- Ughhh...

This place had tempted Daisuke a few times already in the past. And because of it, he sometimes would think to himself that, perhaps, the place where he belonged was actually a world that had nothing in it — just like this place. Yet whenever he was about to lose to this temptation, he would awaken from a violent pain within his heart.

--- Mmm...

Daisuke didn't know what it was.

Yet he could tell that, it was something very precious to him. Whenever Daisuke was unable to move forward, it would become a ray of light and guide him...And that thing was ...

--- Boom!

“!”

After a sudden impact shook Daisuke, he opened his eyes and saw the ghost-like figures that surrounded him were disappearing one after another with fearful expressions on their faces.

He then shifted his gaze at his arm, and felt even more shocked.

The Kakkou Mushi was taking over Daisuke's arm as its compound eyes shone in a crimson glow. He swung the arm that was under its control before firing cannon-like bullets repeatedly without holding back.

Every time the Kakkou Mushi fired a bullet, the (Church) would tremble. Although the bullet wasn't doing any major damage to the church itself, it killed all the ghost-like figures that were surrounding Daisuke.

"Ohhhh....!!!"

(Shinpu)'s painful moan could then be heard from within the (Church).

Daisuke clenched his teeth, trying his hardest to control his Mushi.

"(Kakkou), it's still too early for you to take me over like this...!"

The green Kakkou Mushi trembled its body as its burning eyes were slowly lost its momentum, allowing Daisuke to aim his right hand at the empty altar.

"Okay, now, release your full strength...!"

Just then, the revolver that had completely fused with the Kakkou Mushi's mandible, was spurting out raging flames once again.

Yet right before Daisuke could pull the trigger, a strong gust stormed at him.

"...Tch!"

This sudden change threw Daisuke off guard, and blew him backwards.

At the same time, the door of the church opened. He was thrown out of (Church) just like that.

"Shit, he is trying to run away?!"

After landing onto the ground with a flip, Daisuke readjusted his posture and aimed his revolver once again.

However, the outline of the (Church) was slowly fading away, before disappearing like a mist.

Even the tree that he saw before had also disappeared; it was as if they were both just illusions. The place was empty once again, just as it had used to be.

Daisuke immediately surveyed his surroundings, however, there wasn't any sign of the (Church) and let alone (Shinpu)'s figure. Even the atmosphere that was filled malice had disappeared like an illusion as well.

Because he had allowed (Shinpu) to escape, Daisuke was angry at himself as he stomped his feet at the dirt.

Shifting his gaze to his right arm, the Kakkou Mushi was just defusing itself from his arm and the revolver. Judging from its look, it seemed pretty upset that it had missed the chance of maturing, yet it also seemed revived from Daisuke's awaken.

"... Are you... my enemy? Or..."

The Kakkou Mushi didn't answer Daisuke. After returning to its original size, it flew behind Daisuke's neck and disappeared.

Daisuke pulled his goggles up above his forehead, while taking out his cell phone. The signal seemed to be working again after the disappearance of the (Church).

He then dialed a number before putting the phone next to his ear.

"[Please confirm that there are no third parties within the radius of 10 meters, and report your member code.]"

Daisuke answered with his member code right away. And then same reply came as always: "[--- Switching to communication mode within the bureau.]"

"[Here is the intelligence management department of the Special Environmental Preservation Bureau's Central Headquarters. From now on, all the dialogue---"

"I have come in contact with (Shinpu)."

Before the opposite party could finish, Daisuke said briefly.

"[Did you conduct any combat?]"

( C )'s immediate reply was totally unexpected to Daisuke, which caused rage to rise within him.

"Does that fucking matter?! I have grasped parts of (Shinpu)'s ability!!!---"

"[East Central Division's Kashu level one ranked member, (Kakkou), did you conduct any combat activity?]"

"I have come in contact with (The Original Three)! Isn't that the SEPB's highest priority? Are you telling me that the Central Headquarters are still trying to uphold these stupid rules even now?!"

"Taking (Kakkou)'s sudden mental instability into consideration, the recording will be paused for the moment."

"( C )! What the hell is the Central Headquarters thinking?! Do they think I'm far more dangerous than (The Original Three)?!"

"That's right."

The teenage girl's reply dumbfounded Daisuke; he could hear the sound of him gritting his teeth angrily.

"If so, what the hell am I supposed to do?! I can't fight, let alone defeat (The Original Three). Under such situation, what can I do?!"

"Please take some time and think. Your current mission or your dream, which one is more important to you?"

It was as if the teenage girl's words were implying that Daisuke could only protect Shiika or Senri. Yet, both of them were irreplaceable to Daisuke. If he was to choose to protect one, he wouldn't be able to protect the other.

"(Kakkou), I hope you are aware of this by now, you're the only one who's capable of fighting (The Original Three) right now. Hence, you're our--- the Mushitsuki's only hope. That's why---"

*Don't entrust your hopes onto someone like me?!*

Daisuke clenched his fists tightly, trying to stop himself from shouting that line.

He had never intended, nor did he have the right to shoulder their dreams. What (Shinpu) said was right, Daisuke was just a devil who had deprived many others of their dreams.

"How much longer... do I have to take this?..."

"Until branch-director Haji awakens. That person will be able to change the current SEPB. We can't lose either one of you."

"But the East Central Division would be long gone before that guy wakes up! Right now, the situation is totally different than the time when you guys were transferred over to the Central Headquarters."

"... Please destroy the video that you recorded, I will resume the recording right now."

The teenage girl's tone changed.

"[Start recording --- This is the Central Headquarters' intelligence management department, Ishu level three ranked member, ( C ). I will be doing an oral report in place of (Kakkou). (Kakkou) had come in contact with (Shinpu), one of (The Original Three), and further grasped parts of his ability. This Intel will be immediately reported to the Headquarters after deputy branch-director Goromaru's confirmation. In addition, due to (Shinpu)'s interference, the recording of the incident was impossible. If the above statements are correct, please accept.]"

"... Accept."

"[Good work, please continue to carry out your mission, recording completed.]"

The communication was then cut off.

Daisuke removed his goggles brutally and bit his lips.

He wanted to protect Shiika at Ouka City.

Yet, he also wanted to protect Senri in this town.

The two thoughts that contradicted each other, were running wildly in his heart.

His expression was distorted from anger as he walked away.

Turning around, Daisuke began to walk back to the plaza area. However, he wasn't walking toward the spot where he parted ways with Senri and others, but rather at the direction of the ghost town.

He crossed through a deserted alley that was filled with dust, and enter an abandoned building.

Walking up the stairs, he arrived at the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor of the building.

Judging from the looks of it, this floor seemed to have been an office floor once before. However, there weren't any table or office supplies in this vast floor. The whole floor was empty; and the walls were made out of glass.

Back when he used to live here, he would occasionally come to this place along with Senri to enjoy their snacks; which obviously Haji and Miki weren't aware of. Since this place used the latest thermal-regulatory materials in its construction, it was a great and comfortable secret hideout to have during summer and winter.

"..."

Daisuke leaned against the glass wall before sitting down.

A few years ago, he used sit here and watched the scenery in front with Senri until the sun set. Even now, the scenery that he saw through the window was exactly the same as before.

"Yo!"

Hearing a voice, Daisuke turned to gaze at floor's entrance.

It was Iori.

"Iori... How did you know this place?"

"Well, it was you and Senri that found this spot right? Thanks to you guys, we come here very often now. Oh right, we were talking about coming here before."

Iori said with a tired tone as he sat down beside Daisuke. His expression was not only filled with fatigue, but also a look as if he was deep in thoughts.

"Found anything?"

"Nope... Didn't find anything."

Daisuke lied. He thought that it would be best for Iori if he didn't know much about (Shinpu).

“You?”

“Mmm? Oh... I’ll tell you later...”

It was rare for Iori to be so roundabout, something must have happened to him as well.

At the same time, a figure appeared at the entrance of the floor again.

“You two...”

Looking closer, Akatsuki was standing there. His clothes were filled with dirt and there was even a bruise on his face.

Iori immediately shot up his body.

“Akatsuki, what the hell happened to you?...”

“Nothing, I just happened to bump into some punks.”

Akatsuki replied with a wry smile as he sat next to Daisuke and Iori.

“... Punks...? Akatsuki, you went through the training right? Those people should be ---”

Although Daisuke wanted to continue, he stopped when Akatsuki tried to fudge the topic over with

“Hmm... I supposed I did? Ahaha ...”

The three Mushitsuki exchanged gazes with one another for a moment, before dropping their shoulders lifelessly.

“Sorry, I couldn’t find anything ... Judging from your looks, I suppose you guys are the same?...”

“Mhm.”

“Well... Ya...”

Iori said that before he laid down on the floor and became silent

Daisuke laid down onto the floor immediately after him, and spread his arms and legs wide with a sigh.

The Akatsuki who sat next to them had also done the same as if he used up all his strength.

The three teenage boys that gathered here without any prior promise or arrangement were all silent as they gazed at the ceiling.

It seemed as if each of them had their own worries...

It was clear to Daisuke that the other two were lost. And at the same time, the other two also knew very clearly that Daisuke was just as lost as well.

“Can we... really protect Senri until the end?...”

Akatsuki's sudden words caused Iori and Daisuke's expressions to become serious.

There was indeed such worry in their mind.

Even Daisuke had wondered if he could really protect Senri until the end, despite him having a different dream. And also, did he have the right to?

"We don't have much time... Senri is slowly losing control of her (Mushi)..."

Daisuke muttered, to which Akatsuki nodded his head in response before saying:

"Mhm, we have to do something... Since there might be a possibility that... there are other people who covet for Senri beside (Shinpu)..."

"I will definitely protect Senri no matter what happens, but for Daisuke and Akatsuki..."

Iori paused for a moment before continuing:

"If the situation gets worse, you two should leave Senri's side immediately!"

Hearing Iori's sudden unexpected speech, both Akatsuki and Daisuke turned to gaze at him surprisedly.

"Senri is my dream, so no matter what may happen, I won't hesitate to do anything if I needed to, but your guys' dreams are different right? If anything dangerous happens, you guys should run... and live on so you can fulfill your dreams. Even if there was only myself left, I will definitely protect Senri.

"Iori..."

"Iori-kun..."

"You guys definitely have to fulfill your dreams, okay?!"

Iori said that before closing his eyes.

Just then, more figures showed up at the entrance of the floor.

The three of them immediately shot up their bodies when they felt the presences, and turned around.

"Ahh!!!--- I found them, found them!!! I found the idiot trio!!!"

"See? I told you they were here after all!"

It was Senri and Azu; they were holding hands as they walked closer to them. When Azu saw Akatsuki, she was shocked by his bruised face, which almost caused her to scream. However, Akatsuki immediately put his finger in front of his lips to signal to her to be quiet, which Azu replied by moving her mouth without making a sound: "You better explain it to me later!"

"What the hell are you guys doing?! Why did all three of you suddenly run off like that? Not to mention, none of you answered our call! Do you know how worried we were??"



Azu shouted angrily.

Meanwhile, Senri was puffing her cheeks unhappily as she kneeled down next to the boys, before facing them and said:

“Ya, seriously... We were really ... worried...”

“...Sorry.”

Even though Daisuke was apologizing honestly, he couldn’t bring himself to look directly at her eyes.

Senri trusted Daisuke from the bottom of her heart.

Yet was Daisuke worthy of her trust? Perhaps, it may actually be he, who is most likely to defile her than anyone else? Not to mention...

*--- Can I really protect her, who trusted me faithfully, until the end?*

Every time when Daisuke thought of this, he couldn’t bring himself to face Senri directly.

“Senri...”

Daisuke spoke subconsciously:

"Are you not feeling uneasy because Haji is not by your side right now? In your situation, where you can't see anything, it must be more painful than I could ever imagine right?...Yet...I all I can do is stay by your side like this..."

Right after he blurted that out, a sense of self-disgust enveloped Daisuke completely.

How could he say such things in front of her? He was really the worst of all. However, he just couldn’t help but want to know.

Did Senri really need him? Would she need the Daisuke, who had already sacrificed the lives of many others?

Just then, not only Senri, but everyone else was looking at Daisuke in surprise.

Facing Daisuke’s question, Senri exposed a weak smile as she reached her hand toward him. After seeing this, Daisuke hurriedly reached his hand out to hold onto hers.

“Can you feel?”

Daisuke took a deep breath.

Senri’s warmth was flowing through from the palms and fingers of their entwined hands. It felt as if he was touching a tiny baby’s soft hand; he could even feel her heartbeat flowing over.

“Even if humans can’t fly in the sky like birds, they wouldn’t feel uneasy right?”

Senri smiled as she continued:

"I think it's all because of the existence of the ground. No matter where we are, the ground will always be with us, that's why we can go anywhere we like. That's why... I'm not feeling uneasy, because Dai-kun... and everyone would always be with me. And because you guys would always be with me, I can go anywhere I want ... It was Dai-kun you and Onee-chan that made me realize this."

Daisuke gazed at her pupils, that were facing straight at him, dazedly.

"But, I can only warm up your hands like now... there's nothing else that I ..."

Just then, another hand overlapped onto Senri's hand right after she lowered her head.

"I will always stay your side as well, Senri. I'll bring you to anywhere you want."

It was Iori. He said that as he gazed at Senri with a sincere look.

Right after that, another hand overlapped onto theirs.

Akatsuki was also gazing straight at Senri. It was as if he had made up his mind; the perplexed expression from before could no longer be seen.

"I'll also stay by your side... This time, I'll definitely..."

"Me too!"

Azu said as she overlapped her hand, while holding tightly onto the rosary that was in front of her chest with her other hand.

"If I leave everything to you idiot trio, I will be so worried that I'll get a gastric ulcer!"

With Senri's hand in the middle, they overlapped their hands into a pile.

An indescribably warm feeling was filling up Daisuke's heart.

Senri had some sort of mysterious power that would unconsciously gather people around her. It was as if everyone was allured by her gentleness, or perhaps the warmth of her hands.

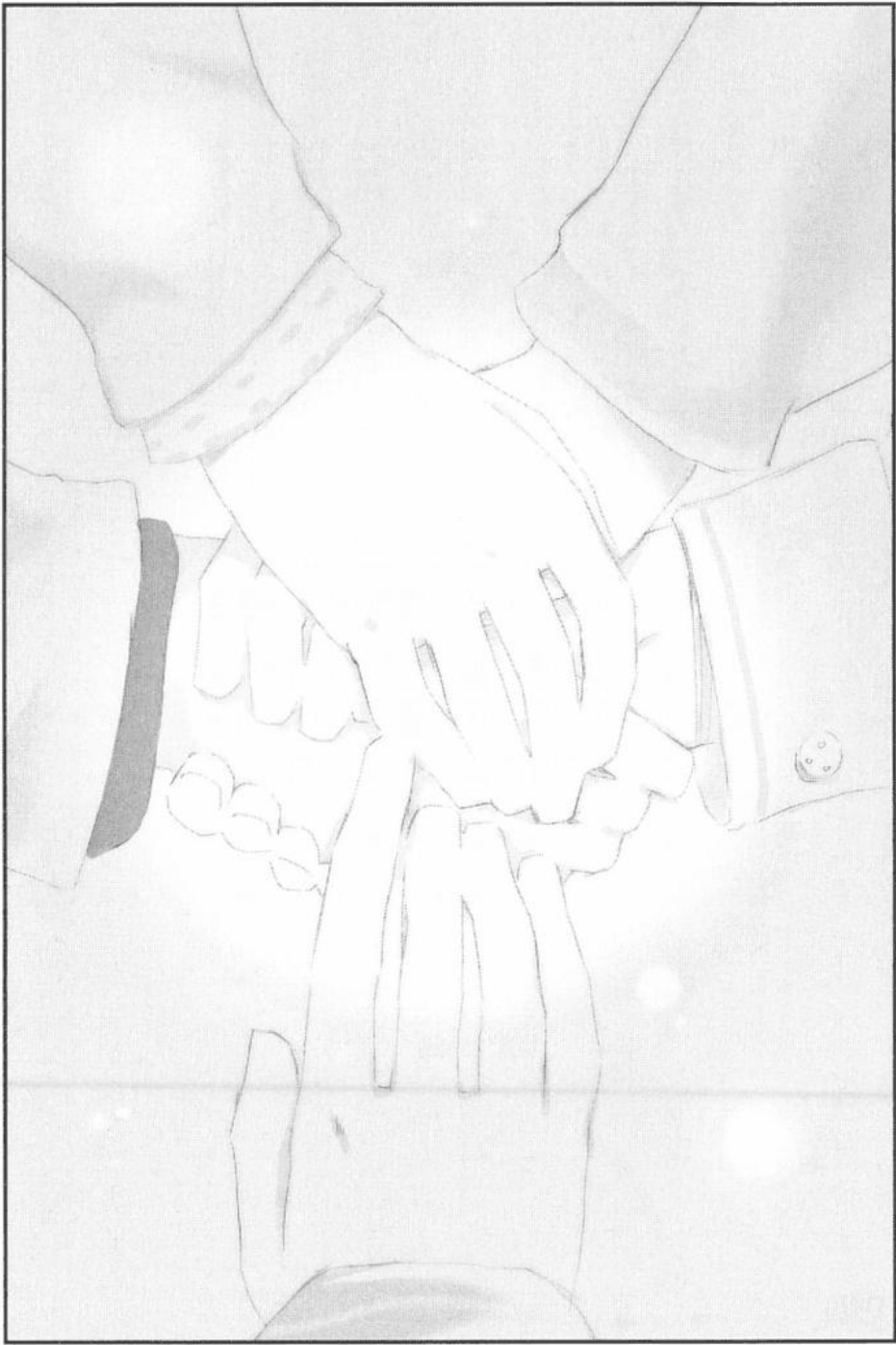
Daisuke then exposed a smile.

*---Shiika, I'll definitely come back to Ouka City. So, before then...*

Senri smiled happily with her cheeks blushing red.

"Thanks... .. But this somewhat felt like we were confessing... Quite embarrassing..."

The five of them immediately blushed shyly as they let go out their hand all at once.



## 2.04

### Touko Part 2

In a dark room somewhere at the 3<sup>rd</sup> sub floor of the new Internal Affairs of Ministry building, Touko was muttering repeatedly to herself as if she was cursing:

“Why do I have to work during a holiday... Why do I have to work during a holiday... Why do I have to work...”

Although it did not seem like it, the room was actually one of the SEPB’s data rooms, hence it was severely guarded. Those that wanted to enter were required to show their employee ID, and they must have obtained permission from the Central Headquarters beforehand.

Touko was struggling desperately in front of mountain of files, while the men, that wore security uniforms, stared at her from a distance.

Since the jurisdiction of the new Internal Affairs of Ministry was under the Central Headquarters’ control, just the process of applying to enter this place took more than days than it should have.

“... Ugh --- There’re nothing but useless stuff here!”

Touko laid on top of the table, complaining to herself.

“Goromaru-kun.”

A middle-aged man with some white hairs on his head said that as he stood at the entrance. He was wearing a very neat suit and looked very organized from top to toe. Judging from his looks, most people would have probably thought that he worked as a manager for some small business or something.

Upon seeing him, Touko shot her desperate gazes at him as if she was eagerly looking for help.

“Branch-director assistant Ishimaki!”

“I have been looking for you for a while. No wonder I couldn’t contact you through phone, so you were here after all.”

As he was walking towards her, Ishimaki paid his respects when he suddenly remembered something.

“Oh right, you’re the deputy branch-director right now. I’m so used to the time back when Haji-san was the head; when orders were given out in such a good and relaxed way. It’s indeed regretful to have the situation turn out like this. Nevertheless, I apologize for my rudeness.”

“Please stop that. I know I don’t have the appearance of a person serving as the deputy branch-director. Please just treat me like usual.”

"Oh, that would be great. To be honest, it felt really awkward if I were to bow down to you."

"... You're still the same eh? So straightforward..."

Ishimaki is the East Central Division's branch-director assistant; which meant he was the man who served as Haji's right hand no so long ago. But right now, in principle, he is Touko's assistant.

He took out a portable ashtray and cigarettes from his inner pocket, and sat on the table that was in front of Touko. The figure of him lighting the cigar and smoking seemed like an office worker that was stressed out from work.

"Why are you staying here instead of going back to Ouka City. I thought you'd already fled back to you blanket in order to escape from this reality."

"I was scolded by Daisuke through the phone. Seriously, that boy would look quite lovely if he wasn't angry... Ah, Ishimaki-san, this is a no-smoking area..."

"It's fine as long as I'm not caught! Ah, would you like one? It must be tiring for you to stand this long right?"

Ishimaki passed a cigarette to the security guard on the side. However, after taking the cigarette, the security guard placed it on the table emotionlessly before walking away with a nonchalant attitude.

Just then, the sound of Touko and Ishimaki's sigh overlapped.

"Because of the member shortage in the East Central Division, I can only come here and see if I can find anyone good. I heard Haji-senpai used this method before and found some pretty talented Mushitsuki."

"You mean (C), (NeNe), and (Kasuou)? Well, since Ishi type Mushitsuki's ability and strength level were hard to test, there were quite a few of them that were enrolled directly as no-rank without even taking the ranking test... But in the end, they were taken back by the Central Headquarters... Since Haji-kun had already done this once, I doubt there would be any more left."

"I guess you're right..."

"But if we could find at least one person... That's right, just one would be enough. As long as we could get a Mushitsuki that's level three ranked or higher, we would be able to reduce (Kakkou)'s burden and also keep the Central Headquarters in check. It's all thanks to (Fuyuhotaru) right now that the East Central Division was able to keep its place, but this situation probably won't last long... But it would be too unstable to use her to fight as a member of the East Central Division."

"So I guess the options are either we lose (Fuyuhotaru) or lose (Kakkou), or that maybe the East Central Division will succumb to other organizations?... Those are the worst outcomes I can think of."

"Why don't we just hand over the East Central Division and be done with it?"

Touko said with a joking manner, and Ishimaki replied happily:

"That works too! That way, both you and I would have it easy— it should be nice. But if we were to do that, there will be no one left to obstruct the Central Headquarters; and they will definitely go all out and try to solve the mystery of Mushitsuki by any means. They will put the captured Mushitsuki into experiments, research them thoroughly, and depose of them afterwards. And of course, they wouldn't have any desire to search for (The Original Three), who gave birth to such precious research materials. Whenever I think of this, I always recall how incredible Haji-kun was. Even though he might be the one who is hated the most by all Mushitsuki, he is actually the one who is protecting them all..."

Touko laid on the table; being silent.

In order to defeat (Mushi), one must defeat the Mushitsuki in front of it. Haji Keigo's strongest point was that he was able to perform such task. In order to save thousands of Mushitsuki in the future, he would defeat the current hundreds of Mushitsuki without any hesitation.

"I... probably could never become someone like Haji-senpai..."

"Oh spare me please, it would be too much for me if another one of him were to appear. The gastric perforation that I have will become two if that happens, okay?"

Touko heaved as she gazed at the mountain piles of folders, before suddenly recalling something, and felt puzzled.

Daisuke and Ishimaki said that Haji was looking for (The Original Three).

So after Touko arrived at this data room, she tried to look for some Intel regarding (Shinpu), one of (The Original Three) along the way, but she only found some very general information. In other words, their intentions and purposes were still unknown; only their appearances and behavioral patterns were recorded in the files.

Even (Shinpu), who was related to the current mission, didn't have anything on record aside from his appearance and past behavioral patterns.

(Shinpu) ---

One of prototype (Mushi) that could give birth to Special type Mushitsuki. No one knew what intention he had for appearing in Housawa Town right now. But since he had a fixed behavior patterns, which were different from the other Originals; theoretically speaking, if they were able to obtain sufficient clues, then it wouldn't be a problem to either capture or eliminate him.

Why did (Shinpu) turn Senri into a Mushitsuki? And why did he appear in Housawa Town right now? While looking deeper into the truth, Touko noticed someone.

And that person was Harukiyo.

He was ranked as a dangerous Ishu level one Mushitsuki by the SEPB; the leader of the third organization beside (Mushibane). He is a Special type Mushitsuki, which means that it was (Shinpu) who

turned him into a Mushitsuki. Touko thought that, if she were to know more about him, she might be able to find out more clues about (Shinpu). However ---

"Harukiyo..."

Touko subconsciously muttered, causing Ishimaki who was dangling his cigarette in his mouth to turn and look at her:

"What did you say?"

"Ah, no it's nothing... I just remembered that guy called Harukiyo was also a Special type Mushitsuki just like Senri."

"Ya, well he's just the same as (Kakkou), a level one ranked monster, that's all."

"There was nothing..."

"Hmm?"

"There was nothing about him in the database... Yes, just as little as (The Original Three)."

Touko had intended on looking deeper into Harukiyo, using him as a reference of some sort. That way, she could better understand about Senri who was also a Special type Mushitsuki, but there was nothing about him. The only thing she found about him was just his appearance, just like (The Original Three). But why would someone like him whose ability and power wasn't recorded or even known got ranked as a level one Mushitsuki?

"Is that guy related to the mission? Why are you looking into him?"

"No, it's just that... something felt weird. He is an Ishu level one Mushitsuki, the leader of the third organization that had few but elite and capable members... We know nothing about him aside from what I just said, yet how come he was ranked with such title?"

"Goromaru-kun, I think that..."

"Yes?"

"It'd be best for you if you could stop spacing out and daydreaming like that... Do you even have time to space out?"

"Ugh...!"

What Ishimaki said was correct, for the sake of getting Daisuke back to Ouka City as quickly as possible, she needed to take care of a lot of things. Right now, there wasn't any Intel which indicated that Harukiyo was even related to this mission. It seemed like she was starting to lose focus because of the overwhelming tasks and problems.

"Branch-director assistant Ishimaki, could you do me a favor?"

Touko raised her head up.

"Could you take over the deputy branch-director's position for me? This should be the promotional opportunity that you were longing for!"

Ishimaki lowered his head and look at Touko who was laughing like a silly idiot, before frowning as if he had just seen a ghost.

"Stop joking around, an ordinary citizen like me could never take a position like that! I'm more happy with my current paper-pushing position."

"I'm also just an ordinary citizen!"

"Wrong, you're worse off than an ordinary citizen."

"... Don't say that so bluntly!"

"Well nevertheless, I don't intend on staying like this forever ... If anything happens, I still have the chance of transferring to the Central Headquarters."

"Ah! How sly! Branch-director assistant, that's just too sly of you! My baby beetle car still has loan to pay off ~~~"

Upon hearing the sound of footsteps, the two of them that almost fell into an argument, immediately came to a stop.

At the entrance of the room, a man was standing there as if he was deliberately blocking the narrow entrance. It was a man who's shorter than Touko by a head, even though he was wearing a loose-fitting suit, one would still able to tell that his weight should be at least twice of Touko's. Even though it was still January, in a building that had air conditioning, he was still sweating huge droplets of sweat on his forehead.

"Since when did this place become an inaugural discussion room?"

Ishimaki immediately let go of Touko's hand, and paid his respects.

"Long time no see, Commissioner Inose."

The man who appeared was Inose Gorou. He is a member of the Bureau of Legislative Affairs, and also a member of the SEPB's Central Headquarters. In the Central Headquarters, since most of the higher ups like director rarely show their appearance, it was mostly Commissioner Inose who came and carried out their orders. When Touko was assigned as the deputy branch-director of the East Central Division, it was he who came and gave her the official documents.

Inose moved his huge body and waved them off.

"Ah, it's okay; don't have to be so formal."



"That won't do, rules are rules after all."

Ishimaki then revealed a very professional smile at Inose who was ten years younger than him. When Touko saw that his attitude was totally different than the time when he greeted her, she could not help but be dumbfounded.

"Goromaru-kun."

"Y-Yes!"

"A new order was just issued for (Kakkou)'s mission. I heard that you were here, so I came directly here to tell you."

"Ah?"

"The target which he is monitoring right now will be temporarily transferred to Ouka City. The mission will be put into action a week from now, using the school trip of the school she attends as a cover."

Inose said that line with ease, yet Touko and Ishimaki were dumbfounded as they exchanged glances at each other.

"Uh... M-may I ask, why so suddenly?..."

"The Headquarters' inspector squad has confirmed that the target, approximately two hours ago, had endangered the general public with her actions. From now on, the target will be classified as a Special type no-rank Mushitsuki, (Himiko). She will temporarily reside in the East Central Division until we dispatch guards to transfer her to the Headquarters. In short, we are planning to carry out the transfer plan as soon as possible."

In place of Touko who was speechless, Ishimaki asked with a confused tone:

"We haven't heard of the Headquarters' mobilization of the monitor squad...? Aside from (Kakkou), is there someone else from the West Southwest Division that is monitoring Haji Senri as well?"

"Mhm, it was a precautionary measure."

"But if they were someone that even (Kakkou) wasn't aware of, then they should be high leveled Mushitsuki right? ... How could someone like that be used as 'a precautionary measure'."

"I said it was just a precautionary measure already."

When Touko saw Inose's smile, she felt a chill up her spine. Although Inose was smiling, his eyes weren't friendly at all. He was probably signaling that they should stop delving deeper into the topic.

"In addition, we had received Intel indicating that the remnant of (Mushibane) might be coveting for (Himiko). Was it because she is Haji-san's sister that they thought it might be a good idea to capture her as hostage? He sure is hated by all Mushitsuki eh. Well henceforth, after taking the potential risk into

consideration, we have decided to place the transfer plan that was under debate into action. In order to make a cover for the (Himiko)'s transfer, we also deliberately changed the school's field trip day to make it less conspicuous."

"Ah... .. Does that mean (Kakkou)'s permit to engage is approved?---"

"Permit? That sort of thing wasn't issued."

Inose answered Touko's question with a light-hearted attitude, which caused Touko and Ishimaki to become even more dumbfounded.

"B-But, you just said that (Mushibane) has set their eyes on the target..... Theoretically speaking, we should let the West Southwest Division confirm her safety. Transferring her at this time is inherently dangerous ---"

"It was just an assumption. There's no way we would permit a Kashu level one ranked Mushitsuki to engage in battle because of this little matter."

"How could you say this is a little matter..."

Touko was at loss for words.

Just then, Ishimaki stood up; there wasn't any smile on his face anymore.

"Inspector Inose, is the Headquarters' monitor squad monitoring over (Himiko)? Or..."

"Of course we're monitoring the capture target! Why are you asking this obvious question?"

Ishimaki's expression was completely frozen.

The capture target --- He never clarified that it meant Haji Senri... Perhaps, he meant someone else --- for example, (Kakkou).

"Also, Goromaru-kun."

"Y-Yes."

"I heard that you're quite troubled because of the member shortage, right? The head-director was well aware of it, so we decided to dispatch some members from the Headquarters over to you. And of course, they will be performing the most dangerous task of all --- Guarding the research facility of (Fuyuhotaru)."

Ishimaki's expression became pale immediately.

"B-But...!"

"This has already been approved, and has also received permission from the head director. Now the East Central Division's member can go perform their normal tasks without any worries."

While laughing, Inose moved his huge body and left the data room.

The two of them that were left behind in the dark room, were gazing dazedly at Inose's outline as it began to vanish.

"..... The Headquarters has finally acted. They planned on sealing (Kakkou)'s actions, and using this chance to dispatch their troops into the Division."

"Does that mean..... they are going to take over the East Central Division?..."

"If only we had a high leveled Mushitsuki with us, we wouldn't have to ..."

Ishimaki was clenching his fists with vexed expression.

"Ishimaki-san, what should we do....."

Although Touko was asking for help, Ishimaki could only show his daunted expression, unable to answer her plea.

3.00

## Daisuke Part 7

Daisuke and lori's gazes were circling around the field that was next to the gymnasium.

They were staring straight at Senri and Azu, who were running in their gym clothes whilst holding hands.

"Senri is so cute..."

lori said that line dazedly with a happy look on his face as he sat on the ground with his head on his knees.

"Mhm, yup..."

Daisuke exposed a wry smile and replied arbitrarily.

In today's P.E class, the boys were divided into two teams for basketball; meanwhile the girls would be doing some jogging on the field next to them.

Daisuke and lori were taking a break on the side, waiting for their turn. Among the boys that were running back and forth on the field, Akatsuki's figure could be seen. Their P.E class was usually consisted of two classes combined together, and since Akatsuki's class was in the same group as their class, they would always have P.E class together.

"Hey, since it's almost time for the school trip, wanna go buy something afterschool?"

"Ya, sure!"

Daisuke agreed to lori's idea.

It had already been three days since the plaza incident, and next week would be the start of their school trip.

But since the historical site that was originally planned for the school trip had to undergo emergency maintenance, the teacher used today's home room period to inform students about the change of the location. Their new destination would be Ouka City, and the topic of the school trip had been changed to city observation. Because of the sudden change from a boring historical site tour to a city tour that allowed students to go to the nearby theme park during their free time, all the students were very excited. However, Daisuke knew very clearly that the SEPB must have done something behind the scene and resulted in this.

"..."

Although Senri was running much slower than most of the other students, she was still trying her best. Daisuke looked at her as a complex feeling emerged within.

*Is it okay now to tell her about Haji's situation?...*

Senri still didn't know that her brother had fallen into a coma. Daisuke had the obligation to tell her about such matters, and also pass Haji's last words to her; those were the feelings that Haji entrusted onto Daisuke during his last moments.

However, Daisuke was feeling uneasy.

There was a foreboding feeling lingering in his mind for the past few days. Although Senri's condition seemed like she had gotten much better, he just couldn't shake this feeling out of his mind. The healthier Senri became, the more uneasy Daisuke became.

Daisuke was at loss of whether not he should tell her the truth or not.

"Oui, Daisuke, wave your hand!"

Being knocked on the head by Iori caused Daisuke to return to his senses.

It seemed like Azu told Senri that Daisuke and Iori was looking at them, causing her to turn and face at their direction and gently wave.

After Daisuke and Iori waved back, the two of them giggled at each other. Akatsuk, who noticed this, was also smiling on the basketball field.

Iori exposed a mischievous smile and turned to face Daisuke.

"What, thinking about something?"

"Nah... I was just thinking that... it feels so comfortable staying here like this..."

Daisuke replied with a wry smile.

It was just like what Daisuke said. This town was very peaceful; it made people feel as if time was flowing very slowly. And because of this, one would be able to feel the preciousness of each second that passes away.

Iori smiled as he turned to gaze at Senri again, and whispered:

"Well ya, Because Senri is here!"

What he said was right, but that was not all to it. Right now, there are many people who accompanies Senri and stays by her side, and Daisuke was one of them.

The days of living here, with Senri as the center, were very comfortable and filled with soothing warmth. Sometimes, it felt just so comfortable that he thought this just may be the place where he belongs.

However... Daisuke knew... He could never stay here. He had things he needed to do, and there was a teenage girl waiting for him.

“Iori... The things we talked about last time...”

Daisuke turned to gaze at Iori, and Iori immediately replied as if he knew what Daisuke was going to say:

“I’m going to be fine. If Senri needs to go to Ouka City, then I’ll go as well, there’s nothing to hesitate about.”

His words were filled with affirmative determination.

“Since the SEPB probably knows I’m a Mushitsuki, I might as well join and --- continue to protect Senri.”

Daisuke had told Iori and Akatsuki, as well as Azu, about the matter of another person watching over Senri. He clicked his tongue as he told them that; mostly because he was angry at himself for not noticing it.

--- Please pay attention to your surroundings.

(C)’s advice was true after all; aside from Senri, the watcher from the headquarters was also watching over Daisuke at the same time. It was really fortunate that the watcher was following after Senri rather than Daisuke at the time when he was chasing after (Shinpu).

However, the watcher should’ve already noticed that Iori is in fact a Mushitsuki. If that were the case, he would probably be scouted out sooner or later. Afterwards he would either have to vow to serve the SEPB, or be sent to the isolation facility. Iori chose the former option without any hesitation; he decided to join the East Central Division and stay at Ouka City with Senri.

Meanwhile, Akatsuki was at loss. Since he belongs to the West Southwest Division, the possibility of him staying in this town until his next mission arrives would be very high.

And as for Azu ---

"Azu --- She would probably hate me forever right? I’ve caused her so much trouble and in the end, I’m going to leave her with this kind of farewell."

Iori smiled wryly in a joking manner.

When Iori told everyone that he was going to Ouka City along with Senri, Azu didn’t say a word; she merely held onto her rosary tightly in silence.

"I guess this means we’re going to get scattered from now on."

Perhaps he was trying to cover his loneliness; as Iori spoke that line in a light tone.

Daisuke replied with a smile:

"It’s not like we’re not gonna see each other anymore."

"Yup, you’re right."

Although lori replied back with a smile, his tone seemed rather stiff as if he was thinking about something.

"She seems like she is getting tired, is she going to be okay?"

Daisuke and lori heard a voice coming from above, and raised their head at the same time.

A teenage boy with tattoo sticker near his neck was looking down on them as he bent over to lower his body, while his finger was pointing at the track field. It was their classmate, Kanari Yoichi.

"I meant Haji-san."

Daisuke and lori followed the direction where Yoichi's finger was pointing at, and saw that Senri was standing there panting.

"Senri... !"

Just then, they saw Azu raise her hand as if she was signaling that "It's okay, she was just tired".

"I actually felt quite envious of Haji-san..."

Yoichi gazed at Senri, and said with a smile:

"Haji-san always has people by her side every day, and every one of them looks so happy being with her."

"Really?"

Yoichi turned and face Daisuke who was smiling wryly and said:

"I know that helping out Haji-san is not an easy task... That's why I admire and respect Endou-kun and Kusuriya-kun for taking the roles. Everyone else from the class probably has the same thought as me."

The tattoo stickered teenage boy said with a gentle smile on his face — he did not have the slightest hint of flattery in his tone.

However, lori seemed to be unsatisfied with his attitude.

"It's nothing special!"

When he finished, lori turned his faced away.

Yoichi's expression sank, and said this before he left "Is that so... Sorry for making you uncomfortable."

"lori... ?"

"I just don't know how to get along with him."

"I don't think he is that bad of a person. When I just transferred to this class, and you were ignoring me; it was he that talked to me with a smile."

"I don't know why I hate him... Probably because he is just too nice? I just feel those kinds of people are hard to communicate with. By the way, the way I talked to him was quite rude, wasn't it? Rejecting him without an actual reason, I guess this proves that I didn't change at all..."

Daisuke saw Iori frown, and replied with a smile:

"Let me guess how he looks at you— as an untamed beast?"

"Oh? What did you said I was again?"

"Ow, ouch! It hurts! See what I mean?!"

Daisuke's head was being grabbed forcefully by Iori, causing him to struggle in pain.

Just then, Senri and Azu walked towards them.

"Ah! --- Iori is bullying Daisuke! You're Flagrante delicto, Iori! Flagrante delicto!"

"Eh? Iori-kun is bullying Dai-kun?! You can't, stop it!"

"It's okay! We're just having some skinship, right? Daisuke!"

"Owww! Why are you increasing your strength?! This obviously is blackmailing!"

Just then, Akatsuki appeared behind the four of them that were in a frolic.

"Iori-kun, Daisuke-kun, it's your turn."

"Okay."

Iori immediately stood up, while Daisuke was taking his cellphone from his pocket and handing it to Senri.

"Sorry Senri, help me hold onto this."

"Eh? Oh, okay."

"Jeez, why are you taking your phone here?"

Iori said that as they began walking toward the basketball court.

However, they stopped when Senri suddenly called out to Daisuke:

"Ah...wahh... Dai-kun! You have a call!"

"Eh?"



“Goromaru Touko’? Ohhh? Daisuke-kun, is that a girl’s name??”

“Touko-san?”

Daisuke hurriedly snatch the phone from Senri’s hand; it was indeed showing Touko’s name on the screen.

“Akatsuki sorry! Sub the game for me!”

“Eh, huh?”

Leaving behind Akatsuki that had a perplexed expression, Daisuke dashed into the gymnasium and went straight for the changing room as he picked up the call.

“Hello, Touko-san?”

“Daisuke-san~~!!”

When Daisuke heard Touko’s familiar sobbing voice, he heaved a big sigh.

“I guess the permit that allows me to engage... was not approved right?”

“Completely rejected! They even scolded me for trying! They said I must’ve had some ulterior motives to be applying for a permit that forcefully!”

“And so you backed down...? Touko-san, could you stop being so useless?...”

“Uhhh, please don’t scold me as well!”

Daisuke felt a headache emerging, which caused him to once again press his temples. Even though it was pointless to think of such matters, Daisuke still didn’t understand the reason why Haji picked Touko as his replacement.

“Okay, I got it. I will try and ask (C) regarding this matter later on, see if she can do something about it. Also, if I could get in contact with some of my acquaintances in other divisions, there might be a chance that some of them could come over to the East Central Division, but the possibility is not very high...”

“Sorry, I couldn’t do anything to help...”

Touko’s tone was filled with depression; she must have felt discouraged by her own uselessness as well.

Frankly speaking, it was all thanks to Haji's reckless methods and techniques that they were able to maintain their current status quo. Now Daisuke was no longer on the front lines, compounded with the loss of most of the main members— even if they were to switch Touko to someone who was not so useless, it would be very difficult to stop the East Central Division from collapsing.

“By the way... How’s Haji?... Is he still the same?”

“... Seems like it.”

“Seems like it? ... Touko-san, you still haven’t pay him a visit?”

“Ya... I’m really ruthless right? Even though I went to the hospital a few times already, I just couldn’t bring myself to see him... I wonder why, ahahah....”

Touko laughed wryly; her tone was filled with fatigue.

“Oh, but I’ll definitely protect (Fuyuhotaru)! Ishimaki-san has also said it before, that (Fuyuhotaru) is the life line of the East Central Division! Indeed, if we were to lose her, our combat ability would be no different than any other small branch division. And besides ---“

Touko continued to explain desperately:

“Letting the headquarters take away such harmless and ordinary girl ... to be honest... I don’t want that - --”

Daisuke widened his eyes.

"Ah, I know that she's very important to the SEPB, and also to Mushitsuki in general... but argh... how should I put?... Even though I don't quite understand what exactly are Mushitsuki...nor am I sure of the SEPB's perspective on the issue... she really didn't seem any like anything other but a harmless and normal teenage girl. Ah, it's probably not that good for me to be this incompetent and inattentive right? Ahaha, I'm really useless after all..."

Just then, Daisuke smiled as he naturally input more force into his hand that was holding the phone.

“Thank you, Touko-san.”

“...Eh?”

“Do you mind paying Shiika a visit once in a while?”

“Sure, next time I’ll bring a cake with me. I found a really delicious sweets store!... Though it’s really expensive...”

After hearing Touko’s voice that was filled with joy, Daisuke ended the call.

If one were to look at Touko from a different perspective, one could see that she is indeed a unique woman. Although she is only able to pay attention to the matters directly in front of her, she is able to get closer to the essence of those matters better than anyone else, albeit unknowingly. This was true for Haji as well. And although Touko seemed like she was driven off by the enemies that surround Haji, she was actually there by his side, all the time.

“But even so, she still isn’t that much of a help...”

Daisuke smiled wryly to himself as he complained in a soft voice. At the same time, the feeling of dissonance was rising within him.

He could tell that something was wrong.

This mission was filled with strange phenomenon. Among these, the most unacceptable one, was the fact that (Mushibane) knew that Senri was Haji Keigo's sister. Even within the SEPB, the Intel pertaining to her were considered top secret matters, but (Mushibane) had undoubtedly obtained them; and the SEPB had also obtained Intel which indicated that they had obtained the information. It felt as if it was no longer a simple leak of information, but rather the work of a spy— or perhaps, one party intentionally provided Intel to the other party.

In addition, the mysterious (Mushi) that ambushed Iori was one of the strangest phenomenon. After investigating through the Fallen's background, they then found out that he was one of the missing members of the West Southwest Division. A detailed investigation was still ongoing.

*Who is it...? And For what reason ---*

Just then, a figure in sports clothing appeared next to Daisuke who was pondering.

It was Akatsuki. Daisuke stopped thinking and raised his head.

"Eh? Weren't you subbing for me?"

"I had to go tell the teacher that you weren't feeling well and went to the infirmary. And since there were that many people, I didn't need to sub you... Oh by the way, was the call from the people of the East Central Division?"

"Well, ya. You can say that it's from my supervisor."

Daisuke said that as he stood up, intending on going back, but was stopped by Akatsuki.

"I don't think it's good for you to go back yet. Senri and Sunakozaka-san will probably bug you on who called you."

"... I guess I'll skip the class then."

After sighing lightly, Daisuke squatted down as Akatsuki's gaze followed him and looked downward.

"Akatsuki?"

"...Ah, can I ask you a random question?"

"Mmm?"

"Daisuke you belong to the East Central Division right? Do you know (Kakkou)?"

Akatsuki said that with a subtle expression while clenching his fists; it felt as if he had struggled a bit before he asked the question.

Daisuke thought for a moment before replying:

“Why do you want to know?”

“Ah, Uhm... because I admire him very much. A Kashu level one ranked Mushitsuki, he must be unbelievable strong right?”

Akatsuki averted Daisuke’s gaze as he said that. However, Daisuke then replied with a contemptuous smile.

"I think it's best for you to not admire him at all. Indeed, there may be a few people in other areas that have heard the rumors about him, and admire him for it— but at the central areas, almost everyone hates him to the bones."

“What kind of person... is he?”

“He is the worst of the worst.”

Daisuke threw that line.

“For the sake of protecting his own dream, he would do anything without any hesitation. He had turned countless Mushitsuki into Fallen, in the past... That’s right, even those that had the same dream as him were turned into Fallen by him as well...”

Akatsuki thought that the reason Daisuke was distorting his expression was because of anger. He then bit his lips before continuing:

“But I heard that he had defeated the leader of (Mushibane) in the last battle.”

“(Ladybird)...”

Daisuke muttered with a suppressed tone as Akatsuki asked another question.

“Daisuke, you were at the battle right? Did you personally witnessed (Kakkou) defeating (Ladybird) ?...”

A surge of pain ran through Daisuke’s chest.

Within him, the last expression of (Ladybird) --- Tachibana Rina flashed through.

The expression of the teenage girl who had passed away in Daisuke’s arm was very serene; one might've even thought that she died in peace. However, not only did her smile *not* save Daisuke, but it also carved a deep scar that could never be forgotten within Daisuke’s heart.

“So it was... really (Kakkou) that killed (Ladybird)?”

Akatsuki's tone had become much deeper. Daisuke, who had his head hung low, could not see the expression he was showing at the moment.

"That's right... Besides (Kakkou), who else could defeat (Ladybird)....?"

Daisuke exposed a self-deprecatd smile as he stood up.

Just then, the sound of the dismissal bell rang throughout the school compound.

4.00

## Daisuke Part 8

The Housawa Town in this morning was different than usual; there were few passersby walking on the road.

Theoretically, the current time should be the period where large numbers of Moira High School Students rush off the train, and go to school in a hurry. Today's morning was supposed to be like this, but the actual number of students was only one third of the usual. This was because today was the day of the school trip, and all the first year students had to meet up at the new trunk line station. [TL note: For those of you that didn't know, new trunk line means Shinkansen, the Japanese's bullet train, Wiki here]

Since most of the students that enrolled in Moira High school came from other town or cities, most of them didn't need to pass by Housawa Town on the their way to the new trunk line station. The only students that were walking in the opposite direction of the student crowd, were Daisuke who carried his Boston backpack, and Senri with her small shoulder bag.

As Daisuke reached the train station's entrance, he turned around and gazed at Housawa Town.

Senri, who was holding hands with him, had also stopped as she turned to face him with a perplexed expression.

"Dai-kun, what's wrong?"

"Do you like this town? Senri."

Daisuke gazed at the town as he asked that.

The Housawa Town that was filled with morning chill, was still exuding an atmosphere of quietness. Although one could still hear the noise of the passersby, and the sound of cars passing by, the quietness that enveloped the entire town could still be felt.

Senri tilted her head perplexedly, before showing an innocent smile and said:

"Mhm, I do!"

"I see."

The two of them stood shoulder by shoulder, and gazed at Housawa Town for a moment.

The first one that turned around was Senri.

"It's almost time to go! The train is coming."

After gazing at the town for one last time, Daisuke gripped Senri's hand tighter.

“Okay, let’s go!”

After a few hours, Daisuke and Senri would arrive at Ouka City. After arriving there, Senri would be first separated from the other students, before being taken in by those from the SEPB.

Although Daisuke had heard quite lot of bad news, as long as they could safely arrive at Ouka City, the East Central Division would be able to protect her from there. She probably won’t be coming back to Housawa Town for a while.

In addition, after arriving at Ouka City, Daisuke must reveal everything to Senri. The truth of her being a Mushitsuki and how she would be under the SEPB’s care from now on. To Senri, and Daisuke, those truths were undoubtedly painful. Would she able to accept the truths...?

Daisuke held Senri’s hand tightly as they stepped into the Housawa Town’s train station.

After sitting through dozens of minutes of train riding, the two of them arrived at the major station of the new trunk line. Walking through platforms, they started advancing toward the appointed meeting point. As they got closer, they could see many students standing around in Moira High school uniforms. Many teachers that were responsible for directing students toward the meeting place could also be seen. Following their instruction, the two of them finally arrived at a place that was crowdedly filled with students from Moira High school.

“Yo!”

“Morning!”

“You guys finally came.”

Iori, Akatsuki, and Azu had already arrived. Since it was a two day one night trip, most of the students’ luggage was very light. Only Daisuke and Iori were carrying luggage that was slightly bigger than others.

“Morning!”

Daisuke and Senri said that at the same.

Shortly after the five of them regrouped, the teachers began to instruct the students to advance. The school had already arranged all three classes into one unit beforehand to fit the cars of the bullet train. And since Daisuke’s class and Akatsuki’s class were in the same unit, they were able to sit together in the same car.

After arriving at the platform, the students began to aboard the bullet train one by one.

Under the teacher’s instruction, they moved to the 6<sup>th</sup> car of the bullet train, which was exactly the middle section of the train. And since the students could choose wherever they sat, the five of them chose to sit together.

“Ughh, I’m really not good with these kinds of transportation devices...”

Their classmate, Kanari Yoichi, said that as he walked pass by. Daisuke then replied with a wry smile:

“It’d be best if you ask for some motion sickness pills from the train staff beforehand.”

“Mhm --- I’ll do that, thanks.”

After smiling, Yoichi walked toward the front of the car.

Daisuke and the others chose a spot near the center of the car and sat down. Senri and Azu were sitting together, while Daisuke and Iori were sitting on the other side of the car with Akatsuki sitting alone facing them.

“This feels quite nerve racking... Oh Dai-kun, after arriving at Ouka City, you have to be our guide!”

The expression of Senri, who was stroking her chest happily, looked unexpectedly bright. Upon seeing this, the four of them smiled right after her.

Just then, Daisuke took out a small wireless headset and put it on one of his ears. It was a headset with semi-transparent color, which seemed like one of those popular MP3 player devices.

When Iori saw the headset, he asked:

“What’s that?”

However, Daisuke replied casually:

“It’s nothing; I just wanted to listen to some music.”

Yet not only Daisuke, but Akatsuki was wearing a very similar headset as well.

The headset, of course, was not an Mp3 device like Iori had thought; but rather a small, high-tech wireless receiver. It was able to connect to the goggles within their bags and receive wireless transmissions directly.

Although this school trip seemed normal on the outside, it was a big mission to Daisuke and Akatsuki. Currently, there was no guarantee that nothing would happen during the period of this school trip.

The train cars trembled a little bit as the train began to accelerate.

Akatsuki then moved the small microphone that he was hiding in his hand closer to his mouth.

“Mission Start.”

Through the headset, Daisuke could hear Akatsuki’s voice as well.

“East Central Division’s deputy branch-director, Goromaru Touko copy. Mission %@S#!... Ow! Bit my tongue ---”



“East Central Division’s branch-director assistant, Ishimaki kijuji copy. Mission start, I’ll be assisting the deputy branch-director.”

Even though the mission of transferring Senri to Ouka City was carried out by both East Central Division and the West Southwest Division, in order to unify the command system, the East Central Division would be the only one in charge of issuing commands. Both Touko and Ishimaki would be monitoring the situation on live at Ouka City. Hence, protecting Senri during the time period before she arrive at Ouka City would be Daisuke and Akatsuki’s duty.

“Daisuke-kun..... That person... Is she really East Central Division’s... ?”

Akatsuki frowned as he threw a gaze of disbelief at Daisuke. Daisuke immediately blushed embarrassedly and averted his gaze.

Although it seemed like the authority was in Touko’s hands, it was actually Ishimaki who would be issuing commands right? Touko and Ishimaki probably had already discussed about this before.

Nevertheless, the only work remaining for them was to wait patiently until the bullet train arrived at Ouka City. Daisuke shifted his gaze to Senri and noticed that she was chatting happily with Azu, who had her finger pointed at the view outside the window.

Just then, Daisuke caught a glimpse of Yoichi standing. Upon seeing him reporting to the teacher, and went through the automatic door heading toward the front cars, Daisuke thought to himself:

*Is he going to get some motion sickness pills from the staff?*

“Hey Daisuke, what kind of place is Ouka City?”

Iori suddenly asked as he gazed at the view out of the window, causing Daisuke to come back to his sense.

“Mmm --- what kind a place huh... I guess, besides the fact that it’s crowded, there’s nothing special about it.”

“It’s a metropolis right? I think I've been there once.”

“Mhm.”

It was as if he was deeply thinking about something; the expression he was showing seemed subtle. To prevent other students from hearing, Daisuke asked Iori in a whisper tone:

“Iori, did you tell your parents that you’re staying at Ouka City?...”

“Nope, I’ll tell them about it later on. That way it’d be easier for both me and them.”

“...”

"Come on, don't give me that face, I'm really excited about Ouka City you know? Since protecting Senri will commence from this point onward."

After saying that, Iori smiled, his expression had not slightest sign of hesitation.

"Mhm, it all starts now!"

"Yup!"

Akatsuki smiled as Daisuke nodded his head.

"After arriving at Ouka City, I'm going to tell Senri everything."

In contrast of Daisuke's worried expression, Iori and Akatsuki were still smiling as they nodded their head at each other.

"Senri will definitely be fine, because we will be there for her."

"I think it would be really shocking for her... but she should know that we will always be by her side no matter what."

"... Thanks."

Just then, slim arms suddenly appeared and grabbed Daisuke, who was smiling, from behind.

"Woah!"

"What are you three getting depressed over here for? Get ready for the first round of the snack party!"

Hooking onto Daisuke with her arm, Azu interrupted them with a face filled with a smile. Her cheek was right next to Daisuke's face, which caused him to immediately blush.

"Ah, Azu...! Wait, your face is too close ---"

"Iori! Take out the stuff that you bought yesterday! It's time to feast!"

"Huh? Are you an idiot? Those are for tonight's main event! By the way, the way you talk is very impolite. How could you call yourself a Christian with this?"

"Shut up, how dare you still talk back. Senri, tell him to take out the snacks with me."

"Take it out~ Take it out~"

"Ah, found it! These right?"

"Ah, Akatsuki you bastard! Don't open my bag without my permission!"

Within a few minutes, a small banquet was formed around Daisuke's seat. Senri was sitting next to Akatsuki, while Azu was sitting on the armrest of the seat. Everyone was frolicking around happily.

Just when they were scolded by the teachers for the third time, Akatsuki's phone suddenly rang.

"Ah, it must be Akatsuki's chick~! Iori, seize him!"

"Why do I have to do that?"

"Speaking about girlfriend..... Dai-kun, who was 'Goromaru Touko' that called you before?..."

"Eh? Touko-san is --- Wait a second, why are we bringing her up for this topic?"

While everyone was chatting, Akatsuki fished his phone out on the side and took a look. When he saw the screen, his expression completely froze. Daisuke could hear him muttering "Vihookumosu" quietly.

Upon seeing his reaction, the other four immediately stopped their rioting.

"Excuse me."

Akatsuki said that as he left his seat, walking hurriedly toward the automatic door.

Azu gazed at Akatsuki as he left, before saying:

"Aha...? Is it my fault?..."

"Azu, you idiot! You went overboard!"

"Sorry..."

Facing Iori's scolding, Azu could only lower her head and apologize. Meanwhile, Senri was holding Azu's hands worriedly.

Everyone fell into silence while waiting for Akatsuki to return. And after a while, Akatsuki's voice came from the headset.

"Daisuke-kun."

Daisuke raised his head, and noticed that Akatsuki was looking at him behind the automatic door. He had a look of anxiety on his face.

Seeing something must have gone wrong, Daisuke stood up and walked toward him.

After Daisuke passed through the automatic door and walked closer, Akatsuki then opened his mouth and said:

"Something bad might happen... No, something bad is definitely going to happen... What should we do...?"

"Calm down, Akatsuki. What is going on?"

Facing Daisuke's question, Akatsuki only shifted his gaze away with a worried expression as he stayed silent.

"Hey, Akatsuki? Oh, Daisuke you're here as well..... What happened?"

Just when lori was walking closer to them, a sharp metallic sound screeched against their eardrums as they suddenly lost their balance. It was the sound of the bullet train chafing against the railroad tracks.

"Wah ---"

Daisuke and others hurriedly pressed their hands against the cars wall to support their body.

Although students were rioting after hearing the sudden grinding sound of metals, they immediately quiet down after the train stop shaking.

"What was that?"

Next to lori who was frowning, Akatsuki held the microphone closer to his mouth with a serious expression.

"(Kaguya) urgent reporting to the branch-director. An unknown shock happened near the rear of the train transporting (Himiko). I will immediately head there to confirm the status... In addition..."

Akatsuki paused for moment as if he was at loss of words, while biting his lips.

"In addition..... although it has not confirmed, this might be an ambush attack carried out by the (Mushibane). Please send reinforcements as soon as possible."

Daisuke widened his eyes.

"(Mushibane)...? How did you know such a thing?"

Akatsuki, who was gazing straight at the backend cars, didn't reply back. His hand that was holding the microphone seemed to be trembling slightly.

"Eh? Ah? You said (Mushibane)?? ..."

"Ishimaki copy, I'll contact the train operator and tell him to slow down. (Kaguya), please immediately confirm the situation."

"Understood."

Just when Akatsuki was about to turn around and head toward the backend cars, lori grabbed his arm.

"Some people are coveting for Senri and might attack us very soon."

Daisuke answered the question lori wanted to ask, in place of Akatsuki. While explaining to lori, Daisuke was looking straight at Akatsuki with a serious expression that seemed as if he wanted to press

Akatsuki on the matter. However Akatsuki, who could only distort his expression in pain as he averted Daisuke's gaze, didn't say a word.

"Coveting for Senri?..."

Just then, a tense voice was heard through the headset.

"Unable to contact the train operators. Although the train has been slowed down, the train station stated that the automatic system was cut off."

Upon hearing this news, Akatsuki exposed an expression that was even more stunned than Daisuke.

"How is that possible... Vihookumosu said (Mushibane) is going to attack from the back---"

Knowing that he was saying things that he shouldn't be saying, Akatsuki immediately covered up his mouth in hurry.

"So that means... It was done by someone else other than (Mushibane)?"

Daisuke questioned Akatsuki.

*Right now there's no time to investigate why Akatsuki was able to obtain the news of (Mushibane) attacking. But if he knew about (Mushibane)'s movement, I guess we could only trust him.*

Although Akatsuki was prevaricating, he still nodded his head in response, while saying:

"If something really happened to the navigation... It wouldn't be (Mushibane)'s doing."

And thus, Daisuke began to ponder.

*--- Aside from (Mushibane), who else might be coveting for Senri?*

If it were (Mushibane), it would be very reasonable if they were seeking for revenge against the East Central Division by taking the branch-director's sister as a hostage.

But, Daisuke couldn't think of anyone else that have a reason for hurting Senri.

Although the suspicion of (Shinpu) flashed through his mind momentary, he didn't dwell on it because it was just an assumption.

The three of them fell into silence.

The first one to open his mouth was Iori. He suddenly smiled and said:

"It's pointless to stand here and just think. I had already expected something like this to happen sooner or later."

Iori then reached his hand and tapped Akatsuki's chest.

"I'll go front, you go back."

"...Okay, Iori-kun. Be careful."

As if both Iori and Akatsuki had made up their minds; they exchanged glances at one another and nodded.

"I'm coming ---"

Just when Daisuke was about to finish his line, they stopped him as they fixed their gaze on him.

"No."

"Daisuke-kun, you can't."

Iori then exposed a shallow smile at Daisuke who was at loss of words:

"We made a promise didn't we? You have to fulfill your dream. If you breach the order, everything will be over right? Just leave this to us!"

"But that ---"

"Daisuke-san, you can't!"

This time, Touko's voice panicked voice came from the headset.

"I'll immediately send reinforcements over! So please bear with it..."

"Kusuriya Daisuke, you have not received permission to engage."

"Don't fuck ---"

Just when Daisuke was about to shout, the automatic door behind them suddenly opened and Azu appeared.

"Guys! Senri... She suddenly...!"

Her words caused the three of them to immediately run for Senri.

Senri, who was having a pale face, was talking to the teacher on her seat.

"It's fine, I might have played a bit too much... I'll feel better if I take a rest right now..."

"Senri...!"

Upon hearing Daisuke calling out to her, Senri turned and replied with a smile.

"Dai-kun, don't worry about me... I'm really fine."

Although Senri pretended she was okay, Daisuke who knew her for a long time, had already noticed the truth. Whenever she was feeling unwell, she would always force herself to hide the truth.

*--- Why is this happening---*!"

Daisuke held Senri's hand with both of his hands. Just then, a pair of hands suddenly tapped his shoulders.

Turning around, he saw both Iori and Akatsuki were looking at him.

"Daisuke, you should stay with Senri!"

"Mhm, we'll be back soon."

Azu's expression darkened when she heard that.

"What...? You two are going somewhere?"

"Need to take care of something."

Iori smiled as he turned to gaze at Senri.

"Senri, are you okay? You're very strong, much stronger than me..."

"Iori-kun...?"

Iori bent down as he put his hand onto Senri's hand, and then another hand overlapped theirs.

"We'll be back soon."

"Akatsuki-kun...?"

Iori and Akatsuki both gazed at Senri for a while before standing up.

The two of them smiled as they knocked fists against each other, after that, they parted their way and started running in different directions.

"Dai-kun? Where are they going?"

Daisuke gripped Senri's hands tighter as she put up a perplexed expression.

"Daisuke-kun...?"

Even Azu was also revealing a question expression at Daisuke.

/ ---

Mixtures of feelings were running wildly within himself.

Daisuke didn't know whether it was regret, anger, or uselessness that he was feeling.

*What am I doing ... Why am I wasting time here like this...!"*

He clenched his teeth as he raised his head. Senri's worried expression appeared into his view.

The bullet train still needed at least two hours before arriving at Ouka City --- For them who acted as defenders, this time period was definitely not short. In a situation where the enemy's size and current status were unclear, if they were to engage, it would undoubtedly be difficult for them to fight with current their number of people.

"Senri, don't worry, they will be back soon."

Daisuke forced a smile upon his face as he tried to comfort Senri. Yet, as a result of him suppressing his emotions forcefully, his voice was trembling slightly.



## The Others

The passengers in the adjacent cars were gazing at Akatsuki with baffled expressions as he ran pass by.

Akatsuki paid no mind to all the attention that he was garnering, as he charged straight towards the next car. Since the bullet train was still traveling in high speed, almost no one in the cars had noticed the abnormality.

Just when Akatsuki was about to go through the automatic door that connected the 10<sup>th</sup> car and 11<sup>th</sup> car, a sweet aroma irritated his nose.

“Ugh...”

Akatsuki jumped back instinctively as he covered his face with his sleeve and stopped.

*This is ---*

His body reacted before he could think any further; he took out the SEPB’ goggle from inside his shirt and put it on. Raising his head, he turned around and gazed at the automatic door that he just passed through, as he reached his hand outwards.

*(Hien)...!* [TL: It’s kanji is 陽炎, which could be translate as Sun’s flame/blaze. Seriously Akatsuki, not only you had a cool name, alias, codename, and even your Mushi’s name is awesome. You’re just too awesome lol.]

An orange-colored mayfly, that appeared out of nowhere, flew onto the automatic door. After the tiny (Mushi) found the panel that controlled the automatic door, it stabbed its twin tails in. The automatic door gave a buzz as it malfunctioned, due to the severing of the wires. With this, the automatic doors around the area should cease to function.

Akatsuki covered his mouth as he gazed though the window of the automatic door to the next car. However, all he could hear was silence ... it was just too quiet— to an extent where it began to feel weird. Surveying his surrounding more closely, he noticed the passengers were all moaning in their seats.

“Sleeping gas huh...”

It seemed like the passengers in the 11<sup>th</sup> car were all knocked out from the sleeping gas. Judging from this, the 12<sup>th</sup> car should probably be the same; only the passengers in the 10<sup>th</sup> car seemed normal.

Just then, Akatsuki’s vision suddenly distorted; he barely managed to maintain his consciousness from fading.

“Hi-(Hien)!”

Akatsuki moved to the far end corner of the 10<sup>th</sup> car where people couldn't see and stopped as the mayfly began to swell up its body. It swung its tail that was divided into two, and from the holes of its abdomen, it shot out a sphere that was covered by a black shell.

The black-colored sphere struck the ceiling and emitted a white aura.

In an instant, a hole was blasted onto the car's ceiling, causing a cold breeze to pour into the car.

Akatsuki took a deep breath of the fresh air to get rid of the sleepiness. Afterwards he jumped up and grabbed onto the edge of the hole on the ceiling, with a backflip, he flipped himself out of the car.

Woosh--- a strong gust stormed at Akatsuki from behind.

Although the bullet train had already slowed down, it was still traveling with a speed of more than a hundred miles per hour. Outside of the bullet train, the air was freezing to the bone; gray clouds could be seen covering the sky as if it was trying to summon the rain.

Enduring the fierce gale blowing from behind, Akatsuki raised his head.

Yet, the scene in front caused him to gasp.

Countless (Mushi) could be seen crawling on the ceilings of the 11<sup>th</sup> car and extended all the way to the end of the 12<sup>th</sup> car. Not only that, there were also dozens of (Mushi) flying behind, trying to catch up to the bullet train.

"How is this possible ... Did they combine all of the South and East district's forces...?!"

Just then, white smoke began to rise among the (Mushi) herd. It changed its path in midair and flew pass Akatsuki, intending on advancing towards the car ahead. In the center of the smoke, a small white-colored shell insect could be seen.

"So the sleeping gas... was released by the east district's Mushitsuki...?!"

Meanwhile, the orange-colored mayfly was crawling onto the ceiling behind Akatsuki. Swinging its twin tails around as it shot out more black-shelled sphere from the holes of its abdomen.

White light began to explode in the midair, striking down (Mushi) that were releasing the sleeping gas one by one. Under the storming of the strong gale, the remaining smoke and (Mushi)'s debris were blown backward.

"(Kaguya), what's the situation?"

Ishimaki's voice came from the goggle.

"Enemies confirmed! It's the (Mushibane)'s remnant! Estimated amount ranging from... a few dozen to over a hundred! Please immediately send reinforcement!"

Akatsuki shouted as he grabbed tightly onto the ceiling of the car, preventing himself from getting blown away.

He could hear Touko's loud surprised voice: "A... H-Hundred...?!"

While Ishimaki was replying with a stiff tone:

"... Ishimaki copy, I'll immediately request for more reinforcements from the Headquarters."

A giant (Mushi), that was at the front of the (Mushi) herd, roared at Akatsuki. Its figure after swelling up its body and spread its wing seemed very similar to a bee hawk moth. Just then, a teenage boy appeared behind the bee hawk moth.

"Efemera! Why are you getting in our way?!"

He is the leader of east district leader of the (Mushibane), Vihookumosu. His blond hair was being blown into a mess by the furious wind, while the bee hawk moth was dancing its triangular antennae.

Akatsuki hurriedly disconnect the microphone of the goggle, and shouted:

"This is wrong! (Mushibane) is a rebel organization that exists in order to save more Mushitsuki! You guys shouldn't be doing this for revenge!... .. Even Rina wouldn't allow this!"

"(Ladybird) is not here anymore!"

Akatsuki fell into silence from that.

"And it's all because of you wouldn't save her!"

Heart-piercing pain was throbbing through Akatsuki's chest.

What Vihookumosu said was right; it was all Akatsuki's fault for not helping her in that battle which resulted her death. Although later on he knew that it was Rina who personally refused him to join, and he clearly knew why she made such decision.

--- It was because Rina knew what Akatsuki's dream was.

"Efemera, piss off! No one think of you as comrade anymore! You had never fought once in the past, and now, you're intending on going against us in place of the SEPB?"

"I... I don't want to fight."

Akatsuki said that as his whole body was beat by the furious wind.

His words caused Vihookumosu's expression to distort from anger.

"You... to this point... still thinking ---"

"That's my dream..."

Akatsuki's voice reached Vihookumosu's ear along with the sound of wind. His words caused the teenage boy to stop his movement.

Ever since Akatsuki lost his parents due to the local disputes overseas when he was young, he had been thinking about it.

Why do people have to fight?

If there's a fight, someone will definitely get hurt, it was something very obvious and natural— an outcome that could never be escaped from.

--- I want to live a peaceful life where there's no war or fighting.

I don't want to see precious people get hurt.

Was it a sign of weakness? Or was it a sign of him trying to escape from the reality? Was it that impossible for it to come true?

Rina was the first person who Akatsuki revealed his dream to.

And that teenage girl, who lived in battle, smiled happily.

--- It's a nice dream!

But then that teenage girl, who said those words with a smile, lost her life in a battle. In a war that Akatsuki hated the most, she was killed before she could even fulfill her dream, and disappeared in front of him just like that.

Akatsuki originally thought that Rina could make his dream comes true. If it was Rina, they would definitely be able to create a place where people like him who hates war and fighting could belong.

"Why do we have to fight?! Senri is also a Mushitsuki! Not only that, her body is also very weak... Why must you guys involve her into this just so you can get revenge?!..."

The moment when he lost everything he believed in, it was Senri who saved him.

Senri's gentle hands embraced him with warmth, and gave him the will to live on.

And around Senri, a lot of kind people gathered.

Iori, Azu, and Daisuke --- Living happy and peaceful lives without any sign of war, it was all he ever wanted.

"Why must we fight each other?!"

Riding along with the storm, Akatsuki's roar echoed loudly against the fellow Mushitsuki's ears.

(Mushibane)'s Mushitsuki were shaken.

However ---

"It's because someone is getting in the way of our dream!"

Vihookumosu roared backed:

"It's all because of the existence of the SEPB that we had to live in fear! For the sake of defeating them, (Ladybird) fought to her dying breath! We have to inherit her will!"

"... No... That's not right..."

Akatsuki's voice that was akin to begging was trembling non-stop.

"That's not... That's not it. Our enemies are not them..... Rina just wanted create a place where we could belong... She actually hated fighting more than anyone else... .."

"Make your choice, Efemera! Are you going to inherit (Ladybug)'s will with us? Or are you going to protect the enemy's sister and join the SEPB?"

Akatsuki was unable to answer Vihookumosu's question.

It was probably love at first sight...

When the first time Akatsuki saw the teenage girl named Tachibana Rina, he had the intention of protecting this person already. Even though she was getting involved in many battles, she was still able to smile happily.

What was Rina thinking when she fought until her last breath?

Was she gritting her teeth with regret? Or was she trembling her body from anger?

If those were the case, then Akatsuki would definitely inherit her will. In his mind, the killing desire that he had toward (Kakkou) who killed Rina had not once subside.

Then, what about his feeling toward Senri?...

The feeling that Akatsuki had toward Senri, was it a replacement for Rina? Just because he couldn't save Rina, he overlapped Senri over Rina, just so he could lie to himself and feel better?

"... You can't make your choice? Then you should just sit there obediently and don't interfere. Your dream was to avoid fighting, wasn't it?"

*Rina, tell me... What should I do...?*

Akatsuki huddled on the ceiling, getting beat by the furious wind while feeling lost.

He noticed that the (Mushibane)'s group began to advance once again.

The blond-haired teenage boy's giant bee hawk mouth was slowly approaching Akatsuki.

--- It's a nice dream!

--- Can you feel?

The two teenage girl's smile slowly intercepted in his mind.

*Rina, I ---*

The mayfly behind Akatsuki roared loudly as it released numerous burning spheres; leaving white smoke in its path, the spheres flew toward the (Mushibane)'s group.

However, a dozen of Mushitsuki returned fire all at once and countered the burning spheres.

"Is that your answer? Efemera... No... SEPB's Mushi..."

Vihookumosu said furiously.

Akatsuki slowly stood up as a rain drop fell onto his neck.

One after another, the rain droplets that fell from the sky were becoming needle due to the storm, beating against the new bullet that was speeding on the track.

"You think you can fight us just by yourself?"

"Rina, sorry..."

Akatsuki apologized with a whisper.

Next to him, the mayfly slowly began to change. Its orange-colored shells were all cracking up from within; shortly after, it reached out its golden-colored antenna from inside the old shell and roared.

Vihookumosu's expression took a dramatic change.

"What...! Is it... maturing...?"

Because of his word, the (Mushibane) that was marching immediately came to a stop.

Lifting his head, Akatsuki gazed at the gray-colored sky with his empty eyes.

"I'm going to betray you..."

When he was almost overwhelmed by sadness after losing Rina, it was Senri's warmth that saved him.

--- If Akatsuki-kun is crying, I just can't bring myself to smile...

Her surroundings were always filled with warmth.

And lori and Azu were one of the warmth, if any one of them were missing, there would be no Akatsuki today.

Akatsuki held his hands together.

His clasped hands were still warm, and it was all thanks to the warmth that he received from Senri.

A droplet of liquid that was different from the rain fell on to the car's ceiling.

After peeling away its orange-colored shell, the golden-colored mayfly howled at the sky, while whipping its meters long twin tails against the car ceiling.

Just then, countless light orbs were shot out from the mayfly's abdomen. Obscuring the sky with their countless flashing tracks, the light orbs struck down the flying (Mushi) one by one.

Pre-maturation --- After a mayfly matures into adult, it only has a one day life span. However, it is one of the few insect that can grow into an adult directly from a larva, without experiencing the pupal stage; a totally different kind of insect. [TL note: this part was explaining about the ecology of mayfly, don't get confuse lol xD. More on Pre-maturation in the end]

As if they were trying to overwhelm Akatsuki, the rain continued to storm down coldly as furious wind blew against him.

No matter what, Akatsuki would definitely not forget the warmth Senri gave him. Unable to protect Rina --- the mistake of losing those precious to him because he was too afraid of fighting, that kind of mistake, he definitely won't let it happen again.

Not only Senri, but Iori and Azu who gathered around her, and also Daisuke were all irreplaceable to him. When Akatsuki was with them, he could clearly feel the peaceful warmth that he dreamt of.

"Rina... I'm really glad that I was able to meet you ... .."

*Your smile... I'll treasure them deeply... more precious than anything else in this world ... in the deepest part of my memories...*

"Good bye, I was unable to protect you until the end... Please forgive me ... for fighting to protect someone else ..."

The tears that Akatsuki shed disappeared in the storm without leaving a trace.

## The Others

Starting from the 3<sup>rd</sup> car and higher were the VIP specified cars. And since the 3<sup>rd</sup> car and the 4<sup>th</sup> car were separated, there was no way of transferring in between while train was in motion.

However, when lori arrived there, he noticed a hole on the 4<sup>th</sup> car's wall. Looking through the hole, one could see a white tunnel with a size that could allow a person to go through if they crawled.

lori frowned as he walked closer.

"Are these... webs?"

The white tunnel that connected the 3<sup>rd</sup> car and 4<sup>th</sup> car together seemed to be made out of large amount of silk webs. Because it was very flexible, even if one were to step on it, it would only sink rather than break.

"No matter what, this is too unusual..."

Without any hesitation, lori crawled through white tunnel and stepped in the 3<sup>rd</sup> car.

And when he looked forward after he came out, the scenery in front caused him to stand dumbfounded.

The 3<sup>rd</sup> car was completely empty.

Not just the passengers, but their seats had disappeared as well. Everything in sight was covered by silk webs as if it was a stalactite cave.

"What the hell is this..."

Just then, lori noticed something that was even more abnormal.

On the wall of the car that was covered by the silk webs, many pupa shaped cocoons could be seen. After looking closer at the area where the cocoons didn't cover, he then realized that there were figures wearing brown colored coats with mechanical goggles over their faces in those cocoons. The figures gazed at the floor unconsciously with their pale faces, as countless silk webs bound their limbs against the wall.

"Are they... Fallen...?"

lori subconsciously muttered that line out. The figures that were trapped on the wall seemed very similar to Fallen in a way.

Just then, many (Mushi) suddenly appeared out of nowhere and blocked lori's path. The number of (Mushi) were exactly proportionate to the number of figures that were trapped on the wall.



After those (Mushi) slowly turned around to face lori, they suddenly leaped forward at him all at once.

“(Hekihei)!”

While clicking his tongue, lori called forward his (Mushi). The soldier ant next to his foot immediately swelled up its body and countered the attack of the (Mushi) herd.

The soldier ant had the overwhelming strength compared to them. After reflecting the enemy (Mushi)’s attacks with its cyan colored armor, it began to use its giant jaw to crush every single one of them.

“.....!”

Just then, something small fell onto the floor from one of the (Mushi)’s corpse.

It was a spider.

The fist-sizes spider was then immediately stepped on by the soldier ant, causing it to spurt out its bodily fluids.

lori felt a chill running down his spine.

“Don’t tell me... these guys are controlled by the spiders---?”

Whenever the soldier ant killed a (Mushi), one of the bodies on the wall would tremble and twitch. Their face would first distort in pain, before moaning painfully with a lifeless expression.

After defeating all of the (Mushi), the soldier ant rejoiced loudly to celebrate its victory by roaring.

After passing through another car, more (Mushi) appeared in the empty car.

“Damn it...!”

After defeating the (Mushi) that charged at them, lori continued to advance toward the 1th car.

The coat-wearing goggled figures that were trapped on the wall, were gazing emotionlessly at lori as he ran by. Bearing their gazes, he could not help but blame himself a bit for their plight.

After passing through the 2<sup>nd</sup> car, lori charged into the 1<sup>st</sup> car.

It was the same as before, there were a large number of coat-wearing figures hanging against the wall in this

However, this was not the only reason that caused lori to become speechless.

In the 1st car, where all the seats were pulled out forcefully, a teenage boy could be seen tied up, sitting on top of the broken operator’s seat. His hands were hung up, while his eyes were closed. Next to the tattoo stickered teenager, a giant spider could be seen putting up an alert stance.

“Kanari...!”

The one who was tied up over there was his classmate, Kanari Yoichi.

*Why is he here...?!*

Just when lori was about to move forward to investigate, he suddenly stopped.

Yoichi, who was moaning weakly, suddenly smiled as the spider next to him sounded a weak roar.

Yoichi then slowly opened his eyes:

"Ahaha, I can't hold on anymore."

The laughter that could no longer be suppressed was let out from Yoichi's mouth.

"Endou-kun, you sure are a nice guy eh? Totally did not expect you would show such worried expression for someone that's not even close to you. I had originally wanted to scare you a bit, but this is just too funny so I can't help it."

Yoichi then smiled leisurely. The silk webs that were entangling him had disappeared without a trace.

"Not to mention you're very strong, the garbage from the West-southwest Division are no match against you."

lori's expression immediately became serious. Judging from Yoichi's attitude, lori could tell that he was the culprit who turned the car into this.

"Kanari, you bastard..."

lori walked one step forward towards Yoichi.

"It was you that did all this?..."

At that moment, the giant spider that was next to Yoichi opened its mouth and revealed its fangs, which caused lori to stop.

"Your (Mushi)... if using the SEPB's standard, it should be a Kashu level five ranked. Although it's quite powerful, my (Mushi) is still stronger, so I suggest you to not act so recklessly."

The sudden discovery of the enemy's identity caused lori to become silent. However, after he fully understood the situation, the heart racing feeling from before slowly calmed down. It was one of lori's old habits; whenever he faced a strong opponent, his mind became calmer.

"What are you? (Mushibane)'s ally?"

"Endou-kun, you sure are surprisingly calm!"

"Answer me."

"I'm not a part of the (Mushibane). But whoever I'm partnered with shouldn't matter to you right?"

“What happened to the other passengers?”

“They would get in the way so I threw them out along with their seats... Ah, don’t worry. I wrapped them up with webs before I threw them out, so it shouldn’t be a problem. They're probably hanging from the bridge right about now.”

Yoichi replied to Iori's question with a reasonable answer. However, when he saw Yoichi's casual expression, he could feel a strange emotion rising from within.

“Those coat-wearing guys... were they also your doings?”

Facing Iori’s question that he said with a low tone, Yoichi continued to reply leisurely:

"You know about the SEPB right? Those guys are members of the SEPB— just a bunch of the local division's weaklings. So I got to thinking, "Hey, maybe even weaklings like them can be useful at times." So I told my (Mushi) to lay eggs into their (Mushi) and turn them into my pawns. It seems, when a Mushitsuki's (Mushi) is controlled by others, the host will turn into a state similar to Fallen. Of course, this was my first time using this ability, so I'm not so sure about the details."

“So the one who ambushed me in the ghost-town was ---“

“Aha, that’s right, it was me! Since data about you was much less compared to the other two, i wanted to test how strong you were.”

“Is that so... Then, I’ll ask one last question.”

Iori raised his arms that were clenching his fists tightly. Ever since he started talking to the teenage boy; he could feel a raging anger filling up his heart.

“What’s the purpose of you doing this?”

“Haji Senri.”

Yoichi, who said that line, was displaying an extremely calm expression that could send chills down people’s spines.

"For some reason, she has to make it to Ouka City no matter what; that's why the bullet train can't be stopped here. In addition, it's not only Haji-san... I also have business to take care of with Kusuriya-kun as well. Therefore, I can't allow (Mushibane) to get in my way."

“Daisuke as well...?”

“Your role has already been set in stone, just like me when I first received this job. In short, something that you could never imagine is about to start.”

Yoichi’s expression then suddenly changed from a mild smile to a disgusted look.

“Well, I actually didn’t have to go that far, but seeing you weaklings playing this sort of friendship drama disgusts me. Have you ever heard of the survival of the fittest? Weaklings should just go die!”

“... Then you will die first!”

Just then, many (Mushi) appeared in front of the roaring soldier ant.

It was not the giant spider, but rather the (Mushi) of those coat-wearing figures that blocked his path. lori ignored their presence and ordered his (Mushi) to charge straight ahead.

After seeing Yoichi and the (Mushi) herd in front, lori finally understood the reason why he felt pissed whenever he saw Yoichi in the past. Yoichi’s words made him clearly realize something; the current teenager in front of him was just like his past self, before he met Senri.

—Back when he misunderstood the true meaning of "Strength", and only knew how to use violence to bully the weak; back when he thought that it was natural that the weak should succumb to the strong.

lori would never forget the promise that he vowed when he saw Senri for the second time back at Housawa Town.

Just like how lori had hurt Senri in the past, this time, he would exclude everything that would hurt her, and protect her without fail.

“I’m definitely going to Senri...!”

As if it was replying to lori’s promise, the cyan colored soldier ant roared loudly.

Senri's breathing was becoming more and more irregular.

Daisuke held tightly onto her hands as he listened carefully to the voices that came from the headset.

*... (Mushibane) has more than one hundred people...? What is the situation in the preceding car then?*

Daisuke, of course, was unable to know of Iori's situation; and even Akatsuki's wireless connection was cut off not too long ago. He was completely unable to analyze what kind situation was occurring.

Ten minutes had already passed since Iori and Akatsuki had left them, and the bullet train's speed still remained unchanged.

Meanwhile, Senri's condition was worsening bit by bit. Her hands were filled with sweat, even after she ate the medicine that she brought along— it was no use at all.

Azu was displaying a restless expression as well; it seemed like she was pretty worried about the situation of the preceding cars, which was where Iori went. With a look of worry, she gazed at Senri as she held tightly onto her rosary.

"Senri, sorry."

Azu suddenly stood up as if she could no longer hold on anymore.

"Azu-chan...?"

"I'm going to look for that idiot. Don't worry; I'll be back very soon..."

Senri raised her head at her.

Just then, Daisuke grabbed Azu's hand as she was about to turn around and leave.

"Daisuke-kun?"

Daisuke silently shook his head at Azu who turned her around.

Since Iori probably had already started fighting against the unknown enemy; there was no way he would allow Azu, who was normal civilian, to go anywhere near there.

However, Daisuke's expression backfired him. Upon seeing his expression, Azu immediately realized that something must have went wrong, she sunk her expression before forcefully shook away Daisuke's hand.

"Sorry!"

“Azu!”

Although Daisuke wanted to stand up and go after her, his hand was gripped tightly by Senri.

“Senri.....”

“Mmm... Dai-kun... just what exactly is going?... Where did everyone go?...”

Senri, who raised her head to face Daisuke, was showing an uneasy expression.

This caused Daisuke to remember Miki’s words; the more uneasiness Senri feels from her surroundings, the weaker her body becomes.

Daisuke clenched his teeth as he watched Azu’s outline disappear.

“Senri, it’s nothing. Don’t worry; everyone will be back soon.”

He pretended to be calm and sat back down on his seat.

“Liar...”

Senri shook her head weakly.

“Even Iori-kun and Akatsuki-kun’s were acting weird before... Dai-kun, you as well...”

“Don’t worry, I’ll stay by your side.”

Daisuke said firmly, which caused Senri to nod in response as she took a deep breath.

“..... Mmh.”

Just then, a voice of a teenage girl that Daisuke had never heard before came from the headset.

“The Central Headquarters’ inspector squad, (Konoha) reporting... (Kaguya) has engaged the (Mushibane) at the end of the bullet train transferring (Himiko)... In addition, because of (Kaguya)’s ability to pre-mature, his estimated ranking is subjected to change... estimated level rank would be elevated from a Kashu level four... to Kashu level two... From now on, (Konoha) will be heading to the front cars to confirm the abnormality.”

*She’s the one who has been monitoring over Senri and I?!*

Since Daisuke had never heard of the name, (Konoha); she is probably one of those high-ranked members from the Central Headquarters’ inspector squad. In regard to the fact that she abandoned Akatsuki, who was fighting more than hundreds of enemies all at once without any hesitation, Daisuke could feel rage exploding within him.

Just then, Daisuke noticed Senri’s cheeks were flushed red, so he reached his hand to touch her forehead.

“...!”

Senri had a fever, and a very high one at that.

“Ahh... I really want to see Onii-chan as soon as possible...”

Just when Daisuke was about open his mouth to talk to Senri who was muttering, a sudden strong fatigue hit him out of nowhere.

“Ughh.....?”

As Daisuke lowered his head, a red dot appeared on his arm.

Just in that instant, uproars which sounded like moaning, erupted into the entire car.

“Wha-What is this...! Ahh...”

“My hand --- My hand is on fire....!”

“Noooo... What is going on?!...”

Daisuke turned around and immediately was dumbfounded.

Every student in the car was moaning painfully; the red dots had appeared on them as well, and they wouldn't go away no matter what the students did.

Daisuke immediately turned around to look at Senri; she was breathing heavily against the car's window. Her consciousness was probably fading away, that's why she couldn't hear the moaning of the students around.

“Senri...! Snap out of it, Senri!”

Although Daisuke was shouting loudly, Senri was still not responding.

Senri's (Mushi) was slowly getting out of control.

Daisuke's field of vision was almost completely obscured by the countless red dots. The students began to lose their consciousness --- and collapsed as if they used up all their strength. And not only that, the firefly-like flames began to appear all over the walls and the floor of the car as well, causing the whole car to be filled with their hazy red glows.

The only one that was able to stand up was Daisuke. Although he was enveloped completely by a strong drowsiness and fatigue, he managed to stay awake by biting forcefully onto his lips.

And just then --- the sound of a bell rang against his ears.

Daisuke immediately shot his head up in surprise.

It was a sound that had imprinted itself into the depths of his memories, one that he could never forget even if he wanted to.

“(Shinpu!)”

Daisuke roared as he surveyed his surroundings.

The ringing continued to vibrate against the air. Its echoes, which were like a melody that could solidify the existence of the air itself, were eroding the entire car.

“Where are you?! What have you done to Senri’s (Mushi)...?!”

Dragging down the backpack from the overhead compartment, Daisuke opened it up and threw its contents on the floor hurriedly. A pitch black dark coat, revolver, and a goggle dropped onto the floor.

“(Shinpu) is here! Please find out where ---”

Daisuke grabbed onto the goggle as he shouted, yet he suddenly stopped before he finished his line.

The ringing sound gradually faded as it moved towards the front cars. Leaving behind only its echo, the diminishing tone began to dissipate into the air.

*--- His target is not Senri.....?*

Just then, something drastically happened next to Daisuke, who was seemingly frozen on the spot.

The red dots that were eroding the unconscious students, as well as the ones on Daisuke’s body, began to fly away from them— it seems they were being absorbed by the car’s glowing red aura.

“...!”

Daisuke gasped as he raised his head to look at the ceiling, and saw a pair of burning crimson eyes. It was distorting its pitch black mouthpart as if it was mocking Daisuke and Senri.

“It can’t be...”

Daisuke's entire body trembled.

“It is ... maturing...?”

Those words were let out in such quivering tone that even Daisuke couldn’t believe those words came directly from his mouth.



Touko Part 3

After parking her beloved Beetle in place, Touko immediately rushed out of her car.

She took off the headphones, that had a microphone attached, from her ear as she fished out her cellphone.

“More than hundreds of (Mushibane)’s remnant and unidentified enemies... And in addition, even (Shinpu) has appeared... Why is this simple mission of transferring a Mushitsuki causing so many problems...?”

While waiting for the other end to pick up the call, Touko gazed dazedly at the ceiling.

In her deserted surroundings covered in darkness, car exhaust could be seen rising towards the ceiling. At the highest floor of this building, Haji Keigo was still slumbering.

Touko didn't know exactly why she came to this hospital...it was just that...so many issues that were out of her ability to handle, kept on occurring one after the other; so she naturally turned her steering wheel to here.

Perhaps she was spoiled too much by Haji, or maybe she was just running away from the responsibility of the East Central Division’s branch-director. Nonetheless, the reason behind her actions was undoubtedly one of them.

“Haji-senpai.....”

She subconsciously muttered.

Just then, a strained voice came from the other end of the phone.

“Ishimaki speaking.”

“Ah, Ishimaki-san! What are the members’ current statuses? If ready, please immediately instruct them to stand by at the boundary of the Ouka City ---”

“I have already assigned members to stand by near the boundary. Once the bullet train arrives, they will be able to protect (Himiko) immediately. I’m currently on my way as well.”

Upon hearing that, Touko came to a stop.

*--- They don’t even need me... Haji-senpai...*

Touko’s feet stopped running as she clenched her fist. Even now, under this kind of situation, she was still showing a good-for-nothing smile.

“Ah... Aha, as expected of you... Thank you for your quick and thoughtful countermeasures.”

“Where are you? If you think you still hold some responsibility as a branch-director, then you should be at the frontline ---”

Covering Ishimaki’s voice, another voice suddenly came from her headset.

“Goromaru-kun?”

It was commissioner Inose’s voice.

“Ah, Inose-san? Right now, the East Central members had already gathered at the boundary, standing by.”

“It’s unnecessary.”

“After the train arrives at Ouka City, we can --- Ugh... Eh? It’s unnecessary?”

“Just a moment ago, the retreat command was issued to the reinforcements sent by the Headquarters.”

Touko’s thinking came to a halt; she was completely unable to understand what Inose was saying.

“Stop sending... reinforcements? Huh... W-What...? The enemies numbered in the hundreds, yet we only had two combatants that were able to fight! Even (Kakkou) permission to engage was also ---”

“(Konoha) has just confirmed the signs of (Himiko)’s (Mushi) maturing.”

Touko was speechless.

“Over hundreds of (Mushibane)’s remnants, unknown enemies, (Shinpu)’s appearance, and in addition, (Himiko)’s maturing... This is the worst situation we could ever think of. The Headquarters has recognized this as a serious matter, and hence, has decided to mobilize the “Annihilators” at once. From this point onward, the Central Headquarters and West Southwest Division’s highest priorities will be to eliminate (Mushibane) and (Himiko).”

Her heart skipped a beat violently as if it was slammed by the hammer of judgment; she could even feel that her temperature was dropping rapidly.

Eliminate ---

Only after spending at least a few minutes, did she finally understand what the words meant.

“Daisuke-san ---”

After Touko murmured weakly, she then realized that her mouth was running dry. She forcefully gulped down her saliva, and continued to speak with a tone as if she was in high fever:

“Daisuke-san... He is still on that bullet train... even that West Southwest Division’s member coded (Kaguya) ... and countless civilians... are on it as well...”

“We will try our best to contain the damage to the minimum. We have already notified the members that are still within the train to retreat by themselves whenever the situation permits---”

“How are they going to escape from the bullet train that’s currently traveling more than hundred miles per hour?!”

“Like I just said, this is the worst situation ever.”

“You guys ... Why won’t you guys just permit Daisuke to fight?! He will definitely ---”

"Do you ever think before speaking? Right now, the bullet train is traveling towards a residential area, where many more civilians live. We can't, just because of one simple mistake, cause this city to end up the same as Hashiba City."

*--- Put it bluntly, you guys just wanted to corner Daisuke into a dead end...!*

Although Touko wanted to shout that line loudly, she was unable to speak a word because of her overwhelming emotions.

No matter how slow she was at figuring things, she could at least sense Inose’s intention behind his words.

In other words, they were trying to trap Daisuke into an inescapable situation, just so they could trigger his rebellion. This clearly showed that they were treating Daisuke as a dangerous factor, and wanted to get rid of him with this opportunity.

“Goromaru-kun, did you hear me?”

Touko shed loathly tears, simply because she was unable to think of a solution.

Over hundreds of (Mushibane)...Unknown enemies...The appearance of (Shinpu), whose intentions are still unknown... And to top it off, the maturation of Haji Senri's (Mushi).

In that kind of situation, Daisuke was still prohibited to engage. And on that train, there were other Mushitsuki who wanted to protect their dreams.

Touko couldn’t think of anything that she could do to help Daisuke in that kind of situation.

*Haji-senpai... Why am I even here...*

She lowered her head and squeezed out a faint voice.

“Goromaru... copy...”

“From now on, I’ll be in charge of this mission. You should go and have a good rest!”

With that, Inose's mocking voice was cut off.

In the underground parking lot that was filled with silence, Ishimaki's voice rang again.

"Goromaru-kun..."

Touko hung her head low as she placed her phone near her ear.

"He generously sent the content of the dialogue you just had over to me as well, so I pretty much understand the whole situation right now.

"..."

"In the ultimate plan that Haji-kun is pursuing, (Kakkou) is a must, we can't lose him. If he were to breach the order, he would definitely be regarded as a target to be eliminated as well. But if he continues to follow the order, he probably won't survive through the battles ... The current situation is totally different to that of a few years ago, even if it's (Kakkou), he can't possibly win against the current Headquarters."

Touko knew what Ishimaki was trying to say.

However, her irritated emotions almost caused her want to refute to Ishimaki's analysis.

The East Central Division, the Central Headquarts, and Special Environmental Preservation Bureau... These things were not important at all. Truthfully speaking, those things had already surpassed Touko's ability of understanding. To her, those things simply were not important at all.

What she had in her mind was the fact that Daisuke was going to lose his life because of these stupid rules created by these adults. Just thinking about that, she could feel a sense of repugnance spreading within her heart.

And also, what would happen to Keigo's younger sister, the girl name Haji Senri?

And the teenage boy that coded (Kaguya) from the West Southwest Division?

And the students that were riding on the train right now? What would happen to them?

"There's nothing we can do, from now on, the era is dominated by the Central Headquarters."

Touko knew very clearly; the reason why she was mad right now was all because of herself.

She could only stand here and watch as Daisuke's and Haji Senri's dreams, that they didn't get a chance to fulfill; trampled to pieces in front of her. Yet she couldn't even reach out her hand to help them.

What's Touko's meaning of existence then? What did she exist for?

"..."

The call was cut off as Touko stared dazedly at the ceiling once again.

The bullet train would need at least one more hour before arriving at Ouka city.

*Haji-senpai...*

While muttering within, Touko's both legs began to walk forward toward the entrance of the hospital.

## The Others

Whenever she thought of the time she spent with the teenage boy named Endou lori, she could only shake her head and sigh.

He must have something wrong going on in his head right?

The nutrition that was supposed go to his head must have taken a wrong turn, and all went to his muscles.

Mhm, it must be that.

During elementary school, he was basically the bad boy next door, and that was okay. However, when he got into middle school, he totally changed into an outright villain. He became an idiot that only knew how to use violence to solve problems— which caused everyone to be afraid of him.

Azu, who lived near lori, would always see lori's mother apologize to the residents in the vicinity once in a while. In addition, police cruisers didn't stop merely once or twice in front of his house.

At that time, Azu didn't understand why lori had to cause trouble for his kind-hearted mother all the time. Not to mention, she was raising lori all by herself.

Love thy neighbor ---

Azu's family, from generation to generation, were devout Christians.

However, Azu didn't believe in God, even the prayer she did before meals was just for the sake of maintaining a nice atmosphere within the family. The Masson Sundays was also for the sake of getting along with the neighbors.

Love thy neighbor ---

*Huh, what are you talking about? Who the hell would love someone like him?*

Although Azu was protesting within, due to her parent's request, she could only go and attempt to reform lori obediently.

Yet just as she expected, not only did lori not listen to her words, he even slapped her.

Facing this kind of extreme treatments, Azu felt a rage exploding within.

From that day onwards, Azu would always follow lori and nag at him from behind; day after day. Whenever lori ignore her words, she would stubbornly follow after him and continue nagging.

However, Azu's actions backfired. Her attempts at trying to correct a deviant into a good student annoyed the people around her; causing them to think that she had nothing better to do. Because of lori, Azu lost at least 20 friends.

But then one day, lori suddenly changed --- It was as if his character was flipped upside down. And the reason for that appeared to be because of a teenage girl named Haji Senri; it seemed as if he had fallen for that girl.

Azu initially hated Senri.

--- Azu-chan, do you believe in god?

Senri noticed the prayer Azu did before meal, so she asked with a smile.

--- Not really...

Azu accidentally voiced out her thought with an unhappy face. She almost forgot that she was trying to be on a good term with Senri on the outside, and thought "Oops..." as she took a sneak peek at Senri.

Just then, Senri replied with another smile:

--- Well, I do. Although it's not God... But I believe in the other me that's inside my heart. She's sometimes kind and gentle, sometimes scary and mean... but she's me. I believe that she pays more attention to me more than anyone else at any time.

Upon hearing that, Azu could feel her mood freeze on the spot. Even lori, who was eating lunch with them said: "Oui, what's wrong, your face is looking weird!"

*Was that supposed to be a cold joke?... S-So weird... What the hell is she talking about? I did think of her as strange sometimes, but this is just too much... Aahh ... So scary... She's just too weird and scary.*

But from that day onward, Azu changed who she prayed to.

She began to pray to her inner self.

--- Aha, Sorry, I just thought of something bad. Sorry about that, me.

--- Thanks for the delicious dishes today, it was very good, me.

--- lori wanted to hang out me today, although Senri is going as well... Whatever, it will be okay! It was probably a reward for me behaving well these days, thank you, me!

After Azu did those prayers, her repugnance toward Senri slowly disappeared.

The days with Senri as the center, lori, Akatsuki, Daisuke who recently joined, and herself. She began to feel that this kind of life was more important and precious than anything else.

And then, she would occasionally act like a Christian.

*Lord, thank you. I'm living very happily right now...*

Her prayers, compared to before, were now more straightforward and honest.

Unaware of the current situation, Azu ran through the train cars.

She paid no mind to all the suspicious gazes that she was garnering, and continued to run straight ahead.

Iori had been acting weird since the beginning of the trip; even Akatsuki and Daisuke were acting strange.

The foreboding feeling within caused her heart to race wildly; it wouldn't quiet down the slightest. It was as if there was another existence inside her, telling her to "Run faster!".

After passing through the 4<sup>th</sup> car's automatic door, she gasped.

On the car wall connecting to the 3<sup>rd</sup> cars, a giant hole could be seen.

The hole looked like a dark cave that was carpeted by countless white-colored web-looking objects. Perhaps there was a crack somewhere, the cold air from outside the bullet train could be felt rushing in.

Since she did not come across anyone on the way here, it must've meant that Iori had moved on ahead. Azu only hesitated for a moment before advancing.

"Ugh..."

Azu could not help but feel disgusted by the sensation that came from her hands and feet after touching the webs. Although she was unwilling, she still crawled through the cave-like tunnel. While crawling through, she could slightly hear a shouting voice coming from ahead.

After she finally arrived at the 3<sup>rd</sup> car, she widened her eyes as if she couldn't believe the scene in front of her.

In place of all the seats that had completely disappeared, numerous strange-coat wearing figures could be seen wrapped against the car's wall. Only the sound of the wind and vibration from train against the track could be heard in the car.

"... W-What is this...?"

Azu subconsciously held the rosary tightly in front of her chest as she walked timidly forward.

"Ah...!"

A broken goggle from one of the figures on the wall suddenly dropped onto the floor, causing Azu to scream in surprise. The face of a teenage girl that was around Azu's age could now be seen, yet her pupils were as empty as the dead. Judging from the fact that her chest was still rising up and down



slightly, she seemed to be alive. Unable to bear the teenage girl's gaze that had no slightest emotion, Azu turned her face away.

Just then, Azu remembered the words of Akatsuki that he had told her once before.

If a Mushitsuki's (Mushi) is killed, they will become emotionless puppets, which are known as the Fallen. And after becoming Fallen, they would never be able to return to normal again.

A sudden fear ran up Azu's spine before enveloping her completely.

*Don't tell me... lori... he also ---*

*".....!"*

Without even thinking about it once, Azu charged straight ahead.

The closer she got to the first car, the faster her heart beat. That feeling of someone grabbing tightly onto her heart could almost make her faint on the spot.

Right after she passed through the automatic door of 2<sup>nd</sup> car, she rushed into the 1<sup>st</sup> car.

The cold breeze blew Azu's hair upward as she shouted:

*"lori!"*

However, Azu could only see a giant (Mushi)'s mouth in her field of vision— with its mandible wide agape.

Azu froze right on the spot.

*"Azu.....?"*

The next instant, lori's voice rang.

And before she knew it, the mouthpart of the giant (Mushi) disappeared in front of her.

A giant cyan-colored soldier ant came out of nowhere charged into the (Mushi) and crushed it violently against the car wall.

After the giant soldier ant passed through, the view of the car appeared in front of her eyes.

lori was turning around, gazing dazedly at Azu.

And next to lori, a familiar face of her classmate, Kanari Yoichi could be seen. As well as the giant spider that was guarding next to him.

*"Endou-kun... Are you an idiot?"*

Just when Kanari Yoichi said that line with a weak tone, lori's body quivered.

Iori then widened his eyes.

At the same time, Azu's ability to think completely came to a halt.

The giant spider's leg had pierced through Iori's abdomen; the claw that penetrated through his body was dripping with bright red liquid.

"Huaa ..."

Iori, who was held in midair by the spider's leg, spat out a large amount of blood from his mouth.

Meanwhile, Azu was still dumbfounded, unable to move, unable to think. She couldn't even shake her head, slowly, she opened her mouth.

"Noo ---"

At the same time, Kanari Yoichi laughed.

Azu's thinking was still halted; she didn't seem to realize that the scream that came from her mouth was echoing the whole car.

Just then, she heard it; the ringing sound that came from somewhere.

## The Others

Facing three (Mushi) and the spider at the same time; lori was both exhausted and panting heavily.

“Endou-kun, how long do you think you can last?”

Kanari Yoichi, who sat on top of the operator’s seat, smiled leisurely as he spoke that line.

And at the other end of the car, lori replied with an irritated tone:

“Shut up, you son of a bitch..... (Hekihei)!”

The giant soldier ant immediately leaped forward at Yoichi, but the spider next to him turned and spat out a large amount of webbing at it.

The cyan-colored soldier ant was knocked back by the sticky web and pinned to the ground. Taking this chance, two (Mushi) jumped onto the soldier ant and aimed for the gaps between its carapace with their mandibles, causing large amount of cyan-colored liquid to spill all over the place.

“Ughh...!”

lori felt pain throbbing against his chest. And just at that instant, the third (Mushi) used its sharp claws and stabbed the soldier ant, causing an even stronger pain to envelope him completely.

Although the soldier ant wanted to break free from the spider web, it couldn’t do anything else besides struggle violently.

Just then, Yoichi laughed with a mocking tone:

“Aha, it’s no use! There hasn’t been anyone that could break free from my spider web ---”

However, the teenage boy’s laughter was immediately interrupted by the sound of something being tearing apart.

lori pressed against his chest as he revealed a weak smile. His consciousness suddenly blacked out for a moment, because his dream was being devoured rapidly by his (Mushi).

The soldier ant roared as it forcefully pulled all the spider webs entangled on its body, along with the iron sheet covering the floor upwards, before shaking its body violently. The soldier ant then bit onto the (Mushi) herd, and threw them against the car’s wall one by one.

“Who did you say was stronger than me huh?...”

“..... You are really an irritating guy.”

In front of Yoichi, who was showing a ferocious expression, the soldier ant tore a (Mushi)'s body apart with its mandibles, causing the green fluid from the (Mushi)'s body to spill all over the car as its corpse laid motionlessly on the ground. At that same time, one of the figures that were wrapped by the spider web on the wall suddenly twitched.

Iori suddenly felt a violent pain throbbing against his chest, causing him to be unable to breathe for a moment.

The two remaining (Mushi) bit into the soldier ant.

The soldier ant gave an angry roar as it turned its head around and bit into one of the (Mushi); tossing it forcefully against the wall.

It then charged straight at the (Mushi) on the wall, causing the whole car to shake from the impact.

As the car violently shook, its wall was dyed green by the (Mushi)'s splattering bodily fluids; as a hole was blasted onto the car's wall— causing the corpse of the (Mushi) that was crushed to death, to fall outside the car.

Just then, another coat-wearing figure sounded a silent scream.

“Aaaah... How could you do such thing to those Mushitsuki that are irrelevant?... Endou-kun, you sure are an egregious one.”

Upon hearing Yoichi's voice that was filled irony, Iori's rationality short-circuited right on the spot.

“You bastard.....!”

Iori charged toward Yoichi.

The last remaining (Mushi) leapt at Iori at once, yet he immediately dodged it by moving to the (Mushi)'s blind spot with his nimble speed.

After dodging the (Mushi), Iori charged as he reached his hand at Yoichi.

But in the next instant, the spider's ugly abdomen appeared in front Iori.

The spider's sharp blade-like legs narrowly missed Iori's face as he hurriedly stepped back. With the sound of a “Pa”, the spider's leg stabbed into the floor.

“What? You mad?”

Yoichi then stopped smiling.

The soldier ant charged towards the spider, and although the spider seemed like it was bulky, it used its eight legs with unbelievable agility and speed, to go around the soldier ant.

Aiming at the gaps between its carapaces, the spider stabbed its leg into the soldier ant's body.

“Argghh...!”

"You should know what you're supposed to do right. Don't you know when to give up the unnecessary things for the sake of fulfilling your dream? Even when I'm trampling those that have nothing to do with me, I feel completely indifferent!"

Yoichi, who spoke that line, was displaying a cold expression that lori had never seen before in the classroom.

“You don’t even have what it takes to be in a battlefield! I hate half-assed guys like you the most!”

A large amount of webbing trapped the soldier ant, that was moaning weakly, once again; as the spider continued its merciless assault. Meanwhile, the last remaining (Mushi), bit into the soldier ant with its sharp fangs.

“Uaggahhh.....!”

lori's consciousness suddenly became a blur, as if his head was violently struck by something, because any damage that the (Mushi) sustained would directly erode the host's consciousness.

Every time the spider and the (Mushi) used their fangs and legs to pierce the soldier ant’s body, lori consciousness would fade away more.

Unbearable pain continued to throb within lori’s heart.

And shortly after the heart-breaking pain, an intense drowsiness came.

“Ohh, it looks like he is almost there.”

lori felt that Yoichi’s voice was drifting to some place far away.

Just as he was succumbing to the overwhelming drowsiness and beginning to close his eyes, his past memories began to flash through his mind; and the majority of the memories he recalled were related to Senri.

His memories began to sink in the deepest part of his consciousness, being engulfed by a never-ending dark morass.

--- So cold...

The rain that beat against his body felt extremely cold as he lied on the ground of the abandoned shopping district.

His mind blanked out; completely unable to think.

He suddenly felt as if nothing mattered anymore, the overwhelming fatigue and intense drowsiness that was seemingly filled with warmth, called out to him— alluring him with its embrace.

*I don't have anything to lose anyway...---*

He had done a lot of bad things in the past, trampled countless people, and was rightly betrayed as a result. By using violence, he was unable to obtain anything in the end.

He slowly closed his eyes.

If he was to disappear like this without anyone knowing, it probably wouldn't be that bad right?

Even after he disappeared, no one would feel sad right? lori thought so from the bottom of his heart without any doubts.

Just then, a familiar teenage girl's face suddenly flashed through his mind; it was a teenage girl who always carried a rosary with her. She was gazing straight at lori with a worried expression.

lori couldn't remember who she was anymore, but he was sure that the reason teenage girl was showing a such sorrowful expression was definitely because of him.

*I will only cause misfortune to others –*

If lori was not there anymore, the rosary-wearing teenage girl would probably be happier right? Just thinking about that made him feel that there were no more regrets; he could finally relax himself in the peaceful and warm slumber.

...?

However... someone was trying to move lori who already closed his eyes.

Even though he had already decided to meet his end, he was dragged out of the abyss by this person.

lori then frowned.

He had already decided to disappear just like that without any regrets, who was it that obstructed him? Who would do such a thing to someone that only knew how to spread misfortune to those around like him?

lori was forcefully awakened, and slowly opened his eyes.

Before him was a petite teenage girl with a face full of tears. She was carrying lori, who just opened his eyes, on her back.

“WOOOOOOOHHHHH!!!”

Just then, lori's roar echoed through the entire car.

Just like how Senri had saved him in the past; just like how that teenage girl who collapsed from saving someone that she had never met once before. lori wanted to protect Senri.

Roaring with all of his remaining strength, lori's consciousness burst through the never-ending darkness. lori, who was roaring loudly, began to recall the memories that he shared with Senri, Azu, Akatsuki, and Daisuke.

In front of Yoichi who was displaying a surprised expression, the cyan-colored soldier ant's body began to swell once again; causing the spider webs to be ripped apart one by one.

“OHHHHHHH!!!”

—It was the first time ever in his life, that he studied so desperately, and as a result, he successfully enrolled into Moira High School with one of the lowest grades; and there, he met Senri once again.

lori believed that Senri had already forgotten about him, after all lori had changed his looks; and to top it off, Senri couldn't see in the first place... She probably never thought that the boy who hurt her before was lori.

However, when lori had his “First” conversation with Senri, she suddenly burst into tears upon hearing his voice.

Senri only said one line to lori who was at loss of what to do.

--- ... So you were okay... Thank god...

lori then thought to himself.

*I'm definitely going to protect this girl for the rest of my life...*

lori's (Mushi) existed in order to protect Senri; he knew that he didn't have any right to go out with Senri. He was satisfied if he could risk his live to protect her from danger; it was his sole reason for existing.

As long as he could protect Senri, he didn't care what he had to give up in the progress. As long as he could protect Senri properly, he didn't care if he had to lose everything besides her---

As long as Senri existed, his dream will never disappear.

“What...!”

Yoichi suddenly stood up from his seat.

The swelling soldier ant tore apart all the spider webs that entangled its body. It then shook its body violently, in order to remove the (Mushi) that was biting into its body. At the same time, the spider was knocked away and sent flying— crashing into the wall next to Yoichi as the remaining (Mushi) was tossed to the carriage path which led to the 2<sup>nd</sup> car.

The soldier ant immediately used its mandibles to pierce the abdomen of the spider that was getting on.

“Uuarghh!”

At the same time, lori vented his anger on Yoichi's pained face, with a punch.

"Uggh..."

The teenage boy was sent flying until he hit the window next to the operator's seat.

lori reached his and tugged Yoichi's shirt.

"I don't know why you're targeting Senri! But I will never let you lay a finger on her!"

lori shouted at Yoichi who lips were bleeding:

"I'm definitely going to protect Senri!"

That's right, even if it means that he had to lose everything else in return ---

And just when the cyan-colored soldier ant was about to tear the spider apart, a voice came from behind path connecting to the 2<sup>nd</sup> car.

"lori!"

lori widened his eyes as he shifted his gaze from Yoichi to the other end of the car.

What came into his field of vision was the view of a (Mushi) leaping toward Azu who was holding her rosary.

--- Even if it meant that he had to lose everything else ---

lori didn't give any orders, in fact he couldn't even understand what was going on; his mind was completely blanked out. Yet the cyan-colored soldier ant released the spider at once and charged straight at the (Mushi) that was leaping towards Azu without any hesitation.

And just then, lori and the dumfounded Azu's gazes met.

"Endou-kun..... Are you an idiot?"

lori suddenly heard Yoichi's indifferent and weak voice that was filled with mockery next to him.

With a sound of "Pong", an intense vibration shook lori's field of vision.

It felt as if a burning hot object had pierced through his abdomen. lori slowly shifted his gaze and looked at the leg of the spider that had pierced his body.

"Noo---"

He then heard Azu's voice...the voice that had always accompanied him and was always there for him ever since he was little.

"NOOOOOO!!!"



His consciousness blacked out as his field of vision was enveloped by a blood-red color; the feeling coming from his body and fingertips also began to feel numb, before they slowly disappeared.

Moving his eyes, he caught a glimpse of Yoichi's laughing face.

*Senri ----*

With his consciousness rapidly drifting away, lori suddenly recalled Senri's warm smile.

--- Can you feel?

Even though his self-consciousness had almost completely disappeared, he could still feel that the warmth given by Senri remained within him.

*Mhm, Senri, I can clearly feel it ---*

Azu's screaming figure then appeared into the corner of his view.

*Azu, Sorry... ... I couldn't do anything for you in the end, but ---*

"See ya, Endou-kun."

Accompanied by Yoichi's mocking voice, the spider swung its leg that pierced lori's body.

lori couldn't resist at all and was thrown out outside through the big hole the soldier ant had made before.

"lori!"

A strong gust blew against his face, and then, he probably landed on the ground or something right? The last sensation that lori felt was an impact acting upon his body.

And the last thing he saw was his soldier ant standing in front of the big hole.

The lori now was different than the lori a year before that could nothing besides shout. Right now, he had obtained things that were more precious than anything else in the world, and he could clearly feel it.

*Hey... (Hekihei), it looks like this is the end for me... So I'm going to give all of my dreams to you, eat as much as you want!*

*So... So, please ---*

In the never-ending darkness where he couldn't feel anything anymore, lori prayed.

--- *Please protect my most precious and important people...*

## The Others

The heavy rain was cut off by the light orbs fired by the golden mayfly.

After tracing countless laser-like tracks throughout the sky, the light orbs struck the flying (Mushi) herd in the sky, down one by one.

“Hoo...Hua...!”

Akatsuki, with his face covered by a pair of goggles, was grabbing onto the ceiling of the train car tightly like a beast, while panting heavily.

The mayfly whipped its several meter long twin tails in front of Akatsuki. The twin tails then suddenly vibrated violently, while glowing brightly.

After the pre-maturation, Akatsuki's (Mushi) gained the use of a new ability— heat energy conversion. It could absorb any sort of energy around itself with its twin tails, and then convert it into pure thermal energy via high-speed vibration. It would then form a thin membrane to wrap around the energy before firing the energy like a laser. Although the attack's power was very high, it greatly consumed Akatsuki's energy.

“Tails! Aim for its tails!”

Amidst the strong gale Vihookumosu, the teenage boy leading the (Mushibane), was shouting loudly.

The (Mushi) herd that was clinging onto the last carriage and the troops flying in the sky began their assault against Akatsuki once again.

“No... Stop... I...”

Perhaps his temperature had dropped too low, because he could no longer feel his fingertips anymore. Akatsuki displayed a painful expression... as he watched through his eyes— numerous (Mushi) charging straight at him.

He probably had already defeated twenty or so enemies, yet (Mushibane)'s relentless waves of attacks didn't cease in the slightest— and they were slowly pushing Akatsuki into a dead end.

Ironically, they were all Akatsuki's comrades not so long ago. Just like Akatsuki, every single of them had their precious dreams.

*--- Rina... So you were living in this kind of toilsome world huh?...*

Just then, flashing rays pierced the sky.



为什么——?

你们为什么这么轻易地放弃自己的梦想?!

G.H

As Akatsuki saw three (Mushi) drop to the ground, and a pain that was different than fatigue enveloped him completely.

“Hoo... Ahhh...!”

At the same time, a long distanced attack fired by a flying (Mushi) struck the golden-colored mayfly. The heart-piercing pain caused Akatsuki to shout out loud right on the spot.

“Why-----?!”

Akatsuki raised his head, gazing straight at them and shouted:

“Why are you guys giving up your dreams so easily like this?!!”

In front of him, were a large number of Mushitsuki, which meant that there were just as much dreams... For the sake of protecting Senri, Akatsuki had to trample those dreams; this fact made him feel lamented .

“You guys... ... You guys shouldn’t throw away your dreams like this in this meaningless war!...”

Although Akatsuki wanted to continue shouting, at the next instant, he felt an unbearable pain throbbing against his chest.

Vihookumosu’s (Mushi), the giant bee hawk moth, swung its whip-like triangular antennae and cut off one of the mayfly’s tails.

“Ugh...Ahhhh!”

The lasers that penetrated through the rain began to lose control, and started destroying the surrounding ground and wire rods. The injured tail had lost its function. And with the last remaining glowing tail, the mayfly reluctantly fought back against (Mushibane).

“Reinforcements... Reinforcements are still not here yet?! Branch-director...!”

Akatsuki shouted loudly at the microphone while gasping for air. He didn’t care what would happen to him anymore. His goal was to protect Senri, not to eliminate (Mushibane). If this continued, there was no doubt that they would all die together.

“Reinforcements... are not coming...”

Just then, Ishimaki’s voice suddenly came through the headset, causing Akatsuki to widen his eyes and become dumbfounded.

“Just a minute ago, the Headquarters had officially changed the objectives of this mission. From now on, the task will be the elimination of (Mushibane) and (Himiko). The elimination squad from the Headquarters should be there shortly.”

Ishimaki replied with a suppressed tone. However, for an instant, Akatsuki was unable to understand what he was saying.

“(Kaguya), hurry up and get out of there! If you continue to stay there, you’ll eventually get involved!”

Because of Ishimaki’s words, a weak smile appeared on Akatsuki’s face.

“Aha...Ahaha...”

Sounding a trembled voice, he then laughed.

*--- In the end, what am I doing this for...?*

Akatsuki suddenly felt very funny, so he laughed. But after he stopped laughing, an intense resentment dominated his mind completely.

“Rina... You are right...”

He tightly clenched fists to a point where it almost hurt himself.

“Put bluntly, the SEPB are nothing but this... They are the enemy of us Mushitsuki after all...”

Akatsuki then slowly stood up, enduring the fierce wind from behind.

At the same time, the mayfly next to him endured even more intense attacks than before.

“Ugh...”

The heart-piercing pain continued to throb within Akatsuki.

Akatsuki’s consciousness suddenly almost blacked out as if it malfunctioned. His past memories were also gradually fading away; he could no longer clearly remember the smiling face of Rina anymore.

Right now, the only thing that was supporting Akatsuki was the last warmth remaining in his heart. And the one who gave Akatsuki this warmth was a fragile teenage girl.

“Who’s gonna run away now... right? Senri...”

Just when Akatsuki was about to raise his head, he suddenly stopped breathing for a moment.

The scene flashed by him in a blink of an eye.

In Akatsuki’s field of vision --- he caught a glimpse of something falling onto the ground near the track. Even though the broken doll-like object flew by in an unbelievable speed, he could never mistake that person.

“Woo---”

Akatsuki forced his trembling voice from the deepest part of his throat, and then slowly turned it into a shout.

“WOOOAHHHHHHHHHH!!!”

Every part his mind was trying to reject the scene before his eyes.

This cannot be happening; he desperately tried to reject the reality before him as all his senses became numbed.

“Iori-kun! Iori-kun!!”

He then kicked aside the roof, and started running.

However, an attack from (Mushibane) blocked his path; and at that moment, the giant bee hawk moth knocked him back.

“Ugh...Ahhhhh...”

While being beat by the heavy rain, Akatsuki gazed blankly at the direction where Iori disappeared to.

Iori was his dearest friend.

He was completely opposite of Akatsuki, who was more prudent— a teenage boy who lived freely and without any restraint.

Akatsuki deeply believed that, for the sake of protecting Senri, they would continue to live on together.

His precious dream and the calm and peaceful life he dreamt of were beginning to shatter into pieces without leaving a trace.

“Iori-kun.....”

Just then, (Mushibane) charged at Akatsuki who was over-stunned and became motionless.

Akatsuki couldn’t move, didn’t intended to move as well.

--- I’m definitely going to protect Senri.

He felt as he just heard Iori’s voice that was filled with determination.

“...”

Akatsuki, who had completely lost the will to fight, was sitting there motionlessly, waiting for the impact to end his life.

However, no matter how long he waited, that impact wouldn’t come.

And it was all because a cyan-colored soldier ant appeared in front of Akatsuki.



And not just only one, many more soldier ants crawled onto the car's ceiling from the side. These soldier ants then charged straight at the (Mushi) that intended to leap upon Akatsuki.

Not only Akatsuki but (Mushibane) as well, was surprised by the sudden enemy, as their (Mushi) were defeated by the soldier ants.

"lori-kun.....?"

Akatsuki murmured weakly, yet he could only see an army of cyan-colored soldier ants howling towards the skies.

Their mournful cries possessed an unfathomable yet indescribable fortitude within them.

--- It was as if they were lori's last shouts before he used up his dream.

And then, the soldier ants' figures began to disappear one by one, and slowly dissipated into the thin air— gently gazing at Akatsuki before disappearing.

After the soldier ants' disappearance, the quiet beating of the downpour against the train's ceiling, resumed once again. (Mushibane), who were seemingly stunned by the soldier ants' sudden appearance, stood where they were.

"That's so sly of you, lori-kun....."

The arms that were supporting Akatsuki suddenly regained their strength.

"You want to ditch me... and then push everything to me... while you go on ahead first...?"

Akatsuki slowly lurched to his feet.

Just then, he noticed the numerous black dots flying towards the new bullet train from a distance.

*Reinforcements or perhaps the ...? No, that's impossible --- it's still too early for the elimination squad of the Headquarters to have gotten here...then... it should be the (Mushibane)'s reinforcements from the north district...*

"I'm definitely going to fulfill lori-kun's dream..."

Next to Akatsuki who was muttering, the golden-colored mayfly outburst countless rays at the sky.



Daisuke suddenly heard Akatsuki's scream as he tightly hugged Senri's shoulders.

"lori-kun! lori-kun!"

Something must have happened to lori, but Daisuke could do nothing but feel anxious. Judging from the view through the window, the new bullet train didn't seem to have any signs of slowing down; it was still traveling at high speed.

The carriage that Daisuke and Senri were in was still covered by a burning aura. Senri's (Mushi) appeared from the ceiling, widening its eyes while dangling its flame tongue at them.

"Senri.....!"

The pale-faced Senri heard Daisuke's call, and slightly opened her eyes.

"Dai...kun...?"

At that instant, the flaming (Mushi) on the ceiling suddenly stopped its movement.

"Where is... everyone?"

Senri asked with a weak voice.

Daisuke bit his lips.

"They will be back soon! So you gotta pull yourself together okay?! Didn't you want to see Haji?"

Upon hearing her brother's name, she began to smile weakly as if she recalled him. Her slender fingers, that were holding Daisuke's hand, gripped slightly stronger.

"I'm.....fine, did you tell everyone that?"

Senri then tried to squeeze a cheerful smile.

The flaming (Mushi) seemed to have realized that that moment was not its best time to revolt. Its body slowly began to lose its color, as the flaming red aura enveloped the whole carriage, began to fade away.

Upon seeing this view, Daisuke then felt a glimmer of hope.

*It...It's not too late yet! If we were able to stop the new bullet train at once and allow Senri to recover...  
Then!*

The reason why Senri began to lose control over her (Mushi) was definitely because of her body's condition was worsening. As long as she took a break, she would definitely be able to regain her stamina. That way, they would be able to avoid the maturation of Senri's (Mushi)... the worst outcome.

As if she was feeling sleepy from fatigue, Senri slowly closed her eyes.

In the carriage that regained its silence, Daisuke carefully placed Senri into her seat.

After taking a glance at Senri's sleeping face, he bent down and picked up his goggles and revolver, as well as the pitch black long coat.

He heard from Ishimaki that reinforcements weren't coming.

If so, then there was only one way left to protect Senri now.

"(Konoha), tell me the current situation....."

Daisuke said while facing the goggles.

He immediately got a response, but it was not from (Konoha), but rather Ishimaki.

"You need to hurry up and get out of there! If things have become like this already, then you have to live no matter happens. We can't afford to lose you!"

"....."

"In regard to Haji-kun's sister, I can only say it's regretful but there's nothing we can do..... Please endure it no matter what happens. If we lose you, there will be more and more Mushitsuki in the future. You're the only one left that can defeat (The Original Three). So please!"

Daisuke softly caressed sleeping Senri's forehead.

"I'll be right back.....Senri... so please wait for me... I'll bring you to see Haji really soon."

Senri was just like a little sister who admired him innocently. There was no way Daisuke would abandon her, not to mention he still hadn't pass on the words that Haji entrusted onto him.

After smiling weakly at Senri, Daisuke immediately put up a serious expression.

"The battle at the end of the train is still continuing..... and I have yet to confirm the situation in the front car. In addition, I have also heard the ringing sound that proves that (Shinpu) is near my position....."

"You can't! Please immediately get out of there! The Headquarters intended to eliminate you along with Haji-kun's sister."

"Even without engaging, there's still a way to stop the train."

After Daisuke briefly spoke, he began to move toward the front car. Although he said so to Ishimaki, he didn't know whether or not he could do it for certain.

*(Shinpu) is at the front, huh...*

Daisuke then wore the pitch black long coat over his uniform.

“Didn't you want to protect (Fuyuhotaru) at the East Central Division?”

Ishimaki's sudden line strongly caused Daisuke's determination to waver.

*Shiika ---*

He input more force into his hand that was holding the revolver.

The new bullet train probably needed tens of minutes before it could arrive at Ouka City. As long as they could reach Ouka City, there would eventually be a solution to solve everything.

With a turn, Daisuke began to walk forward once again.

4.09

The Others

*Aaah, Lord ---*

In the first carriage where lori had already disappeared, Azu was left completely dumbfounded.

She sat weakly on the floor as she gazed at the giant hole on the wall where lori was thrown out.

*Why ---?*

The ugly (Mushi) wiggled its antennae in front of Azu, as the teenage boy who controlled the gigantic spider, looked over at her direction from a distance.

*Why did it turn out like this ---?*

She couldn't even move her fingers or sound a word; she just stared blankly.

Her emotions were rejecting the reality in front of her, making her unable to feel the authenticity of anything.

The only thing she could feel were the traces of warm tears on her cheeks.

Azu always prayed before meals and she would always go to the Mass every Sunday as well ---

Just then, roars echoed throughout the carriage.

*"...! What...?!"*

A cyan-colored soldier ant crawled in from the giant hole in the wall— and not just one, but a total of three huge soldier ants. They immediately charged straight at the giant spider and the (Mushi).

*"That.....Endou's...! Is he still alive?!"*

A giant soldier ant bit into the (Mushi) that was in front of Azu, and crushed it apart with its strong mandibles. On the other hand, one of the soldier ants leapt at the spider, while the last one approached Azu.

*"...I-lori...?"*

The cyan-colored soldier ant nudged Azu with its big head and gently pushed her towards the 2<sup>nd</sup> car— as if it was signaling her to not come any closer.

*"...Is it ... lori...?"*

Azu gently touched the soldier ant's head, but it didn't respond; it just kept signaling her to escape quickly.

Just then, the soldier ant that eliminated the (Mushi), joined the battle against the spider. Facing two soldier ants at the same time, the spider moaned painfully as Yoichi's expression distorted from a pain in his side.

"Uuuaghhh...!"

"Iori---"

The soldier ant continued to shake its head desperately as if it was pleading with Azu to stay back, Azu then noticed.

The soldier ants' bodies began to fade away, as if they were dissipating into the air. When Azu saw that their outlines were becoming bleary, she could feel something similar to the fear from before, beginning to envelope her once again.

"No... Noo... Iori, Don't..."

However, Azu's plea had no effect at all; the soldier ants' bodies were still decomposing.

"No... Please don't go... Iori..."

Her arms suddenly lost support of the soldier ant.

Before it fully vanished, the soldier ant's eyes gently gazed straight at Azu.

"Ahh...Ahhhh, Iori... Why did it turn out like this..."

Azu reached her hands toward the space where the soldier ant had disappeared as tears began to overflow once again.

Iori had finally changed into a great person, and although he had committed a lot of crimes in the past, he was in actuality a good person ---

Azu continued to search for an answer within her heart.

*Why did it turn out like this... .. Whose fault is it that everything turned out like this? Lord, please tell me*  
---

"Iori....."

Through the eyes of Azu, who was still searching for Iori's presence with her hands, Yoichi's approaching figure was reflected.

"Scared me a bit there... looks like that was his final struggle. What a hard-to-get-rid-of ant— felt just like a cockroach. Okay, Sunakozaka-san..."

The spider slowly raised its long, sharp clawed limbs up in the air.

“You hold the same role as Endou-kun once did. No matter how calm that man may be, if he were to see this sight, he probably wouldn't be able to take it, would he?”

Azu gazed dazedly at the view in front of her as an answer surfaced in her mind.

*So it was like that ---*

It was not her fault, nor Iori's fault.

Then whose fault was it?

Azu watched the spider's leg gradually closing in at her chest as she pondered.

*It's all Senri's fault, right? Iori.....*

Just then, the view in front of Azu suddenly stopped. The world began to lose its color as the spider's leg came to a stop.

--- A heart throbbing ringing, suddenly rang throughout the surroundings.

“...!”

When Azu heard the sound, she came back to her sense.

After coming back to her senses, she then found herself at an unknown place.

The ringing continued to vibrate against the air. Every time the sound echoed, the surrounding air would gain a humid feeling as it became heavier.

In front of her stood a tree.

And behind that tree, was a half-ruined small building. To Azu, it was a building that she was very familiar with --- That building was just like a church. Yet on the tip of the building there was only a broken beam, the cross that was supposed to be there could not be seen.

Every time she heard the ringing, her consciousness would blank out even more; Azu couldn't remember how she got there anymore.

“Oh lost one... cometh to mine side...”

Just then, a voice echoed out of nowhere. Although it was a hoarse voice which seemed to be coming from an elder, to Azu at that moment, the voice was just like a revelation from an oracle.

Azu's body stiffened due to nervousness.

“Oh lost one... cometh to mine side now...”

The voice rang once again; it seemed to be coming from the direction of the building.

Azu held tightly onto the rosary on her chest. Surprisingly, she felt no fear as her legs began to move towards the direction of the building very naturally.

After stepping into the building, the first thing that appeared into her view was the empty altar. Only darkness could be seen at the spot where the statue supposed to be.

Wooden benches could be seen neatly lined within the building, while candles mounted on the wall, surrounded the benches.

"Thou dost suffer from a sorrow most grave..."

The voice rang.

The memories of lori's final moment began to flash through her mind --- The moment when lori was stabbed by the spider and thrown out the new bullet train.

Azu held tightly onto the rosary and mumbled:

"Yes... I lost a person that's very precious to me... Why did he have to go through that?..."

Precious person.

That's right, to Azu, lori was more precious than everything else. She didn't know exactly when she started to feel like that; thinking back at it now, it was probably when she met him for the first time that she became like this.

Azu never told him her feelings; she just treasured them deeply inside her heart.

On top of her praying hands holding the rosary, a small droplet of liquid splattered.

"Why...Why did no one want to save lori.....?"

Although lori had done a lot of bad things in the past, he was slowly changing over time. Throughout this one year, he had gradually become a thoughtful and kind boy. Seeing this change, Azu felt happy for him from the bottom of her heart.

"Alas, the lad fell under the seduction of a devil."

Azu widened her eyes.

"Devil...?"

"Aye, an evil being, thou is well aware of this individual."

The person who incited lori.

The person who was the trigger of lori's death.

--- Haji Senri!

The moment when Azu recalled that name, she could feel a dark emotion gradually rising within her.

“Senri.....”

Azu’s expression suddenly changed.

*Senri...*

*That’s right, it must be Senri.*

Azu had prayed every day to the God.

Iori had changed compared to before; he was gradually becoming a kind and gentle boy.

God shouldn’t be miserly at bringing salvation to those who did good everyday right?

Then, whose fault was it?...

The answer was obvious; Azu actually knew it since a long time ago. Ever since that first encounter with her, Azu had hated that teenage girl.

Senri.

Senri.

Senri.

It was her that took away Iori from Azu.

And then took away his life from him.

“Senri.....!”

The voice, that was echoing above her, seemed to have received her hateful blames.

“Allow I to bestow power upon thee...!”

The tone of the voice suddenly turned one hundred eighty degrees. It had become a deep suppressed voice as, if it was the evil coming from the abyss itself; totally different than the gentle tone before.

“Power.....”

Azu’s voice slowly synchronized with the evil voice, and became deep and cold as well.

"That devil hath failed mine expectations. Nay, that devil doth not comprehend how to use her power... Therefore thou shall inherit this power, and revenge!"

A grim smile slowly appeared on Azu’s face.



Right now she understood.

That voice --- it was coming from the god in the heaven that was summoned by Azu herself. The hatred and jealousy that Azu had been concealing had finally summoned the god.

"Now chooseth... Dost thou desire the flames which could rend all into ashes? Or the torrent which engulfs all in its path. Or perhaps a tempest to blow everything away? The earth which may crumble everything... Or the light? Darkness? Life? Death? Anger? Misery? Even the void is fine! Pick any power that thy desires! Thou shall become the "King" of Mushitsuki, and sacrifice many more dreams to !!"

"The King... of Mushitsuki."

Azu thought from the bottom of her heart.

The reason why lori didn't choose her was definitely because that she wasn't a Mushitsuki right? Was it because the fact that both of them were Mushitsuki that lori chose that fragile teenage girl over her?

If so, if she herself was to become a Mushitsuki, then lori would ---

"If I can become a Mushitsuki then.....!"

She would be able to avenge Senri.

To make her fully suffer---

lori's pain... and her pain. Make that incompetent woman who couldn't do anything without the cares of others, to make her suffer ---

Azu laughed sinisterly as she input more force into her hands that were holding the rosary. And because she used too much strength, the sharp edge of the rosary cut her skin.

A droplet of red liquid dropped onto the floor.

Azu felt pain, and slowly opened her hands; the silver rosary was stained by blood.

"Ah..."

A weak hoarse voice escaped her mouth.

--- Azu-chan, do you believe in god?...

Just then, Senri's innocent smile flashed through her mind.

She then suddenly remembered --- She actually didn't believe in god.

"Come, and accept me!..... Sunakozaka Azu!"

"....."

She continued to remember.

The moment when she told lori that she wanted to become a Mushitsuki, why did lori got mad?

How did lori regain his kind-hearted self?

What was her real wish?

“Aahh, Lord... Thank you...”

Azu held the rosary properly, and closed her eyes.

“Pray... Which power dost thou desire---”

“I have truly received your grace... ... Right now, I’m thankful to you from the bottom of my heart that I’m able to greet this moment.”

Azu held the rosary in front of her chest, and prayed wholeheartedly once again.

To Azu, her most precious person in this world was lori. And because of the wish that he prayed for from the bottom of his heart, he was redeemed, and thus he saved Azu as well.

--- Can you feel?

At that time, the warmth that she received from her five most precious companions, could still be felt even then.

*It’s okay, I can clearly feel it, Senri...*

*lori must have felt it as well.*

The warmth given by Senri caused Azu, who never believed in anything or ever desired for anything, to have a dream.

“You...?”

The owner of the voice seemed to have noticed the abnormality as the tone of his voice was beginning to waver.

“Even if lori cannot come back to life, it’s fine.”

In the middle of the chapel, Azu was still praying to the invisible god.

“You don’t have to retain my life anymore.”

Why did she suddenly become so earnest? It was because the feeling of her most precious person’s.

His feelings were Azu’s wishes.

“So, please bless that child..... please protect our most precious Senri.”

It was not because the will of others, but the honest feeling that came from the bottom of her heart; a pure simple wish.

“Why---....”

The giant bell then sounded a discordant tone of destruction.

“WWWHHHHYYYYY!!!”

A crispy loud sound akin to glasses being shattered into pieces echoed the surrounding as the church itself was falling apart.

With a sound of “Pong”, a vibration shook Azu’s body.

The world began to fill with colors once again as the time began to flow.

Azu held onto her rosary and smiled weakly as a droplet of blood, shed from the corner of her lip.

She then closed her eyes and whispered to her most precious person in her heart.

*Iori... I've finally found it ---*



Azu's body was pierced by the spider's leg as she recalled Senri for the last time.

*Senri, you have to live on okay? And then, together with everyone ---*

A voice suddenly came from behind her, but Azu's embers of life had already faded to a point where she couldn't even recognize that it was Daisuke's voice anymore.

*Together with everyone, let's go back to Housawa Town once more ---*

Azu carefully and gently treasured the dream that she finally found in the bottom of her heart as her consciousness began to fade before completely vanishing...

Daisuke could feel that— the view that reflected through his eyes; was gradually releasing the irrationality that he had been suppressing the entire time.

As he came to the first carriage, the first thing he saw was Azu holding her rosary, while closing her eyes.

“Aahh.....?”

Daisuke’s voice became inaudible as a sharp spider leg pierced through Azu’s body.

Daisuke then raised his head and saw his classmate, Kanari Yoichi, displaying a cold grin.

“Perfect timing, you came at the right time! (Kakkou)!”

Why did Yoichi know about Daisuke’s alias? Daisuke didn’t even have time to think about that.

“Needless for me to say, both Endou-kun and Sunakozaka-san won’t make it to Ouka City, am I right.”

Daisuke lowered his head once again, and gazed at Azu.

Although blood could be seen flowing down the corner of her mouth, her expression was extremely calm — as if she was smiling.

Daisuke then began to merge Azu’s smile with the smile Tachibana Rina had before drawing her last breath.

“What happened? What’s going on?! Report at once!!”

Daisuke didn’t listen to Ishimaki’s voice.

At that moment, the spider moved its body, causing Azu to fall onto the floor.

“You will arrive at Ouka City really soon! You must not engage ---”

Green tentacles rapidly stretched towards Daisuke’s whole body.

“Woo---”

As Daisuke hung his head low and squeezed out a tiny voice, green patterns could be seen appearing near his neck and arms. The long antennae Kakkou Mushi had already fused with the revolver on his right hand.

--- The last remaining bit of rationality in the deepest part of his heart --- burned out.

“WOOOOOOAAHHHH!!!”

Daisuke roared out from his heart and leaped; charging straight at the spider.

“I never intended to fight you head on from the start.”

Yoichi snickered as the spider turned around, facing Daisuke with its abdomen before firing a large volume of spider webs, engulfing Daisuke.

The sticky spider webs immediately covered and pinned Daisuke onto the ground, while elastic spider webs were added on to increase toughness. Within a few seconds, the spider webs formed a cocoon-like white cage, trapping Daisuke within.

Yoichi then spread out his hands as tiny spiders appeared near his feet. The fist-sized spiders crawled past Daisuke and stormed toward the latter cars like endless waves.

“Now that you’re here, there’s no use for the others! I’ll turn Haji-san, and Ogata-kun, as well as (Mushibane)’s (Mushi) into my pawns! And then this train will head directly to Ouka City ---”

Yoichi’s voice was suddenly interrupted halfway.

And the reason for that was because Daisuke was grabbing onto his face --- he effortlessly destroyed the white cage from within.

“What---!”

After seeing Daisuke glare at him from within the shattered cage, Yoichi fell into a panic.

Just then, the spider swung its sharp claws at Daisuke.

A sound akin to a cannon being fired rang throughout.

The white cage was shattered apart as the spider’s leg was blasted into pieces. The bullet that mercilessly minced the spider’s leg didn’t decrease in strength at all; it directly penetrated the carriage’s wall with ease.

“Uuaarggh!!”

Yoichi groaned painfully as the spider used its remaining legs to attack Daisuke. The sharp claws launched at Daisuke all at once.

Daisuke ,however, was still glaring motionless at Yoichi. The long coat designed to protect against heat and bladed weapons, blocked the spider's claws. And although it could protect against slashing and cutting, it couldn't fully reduce the impact; but Daisuke ignored the pain from his wounds.

He then single-handedly picked up Yoichi’s body, and threw him at the operator’s seat in front.

“Ugah!...”

Daisuke slowly walked towards the teenage boy who had fallen on the ground.

Meanwhile, the spider was still attacking Daisuke, yet he didn't even bother to turn around, and merely moved his hand at the direction of the spider and pulled the trigger.

The gunshot echoed.

"Uaggh!!"

A painful expression emerged on Yoichi's face.

After Daisuke closed in on Yoichi, without so much as a glance, he aimed at the direction where the spider should have been and continuously pulled the trigger.

Every time the gunshot rang, Yoichi's body would twitch violently. One hole after another was blasted into the carriage wall, as the tiny spiders filled the surroundings groaned painfully before disappearing.

"Uaghh... D-Demon..."

Yoichi was raving in panic as he watched Daisuke slowly walking closer to him with a terrified look.

"Why---?"

Daisuke forced his voice out to question:

"Why did they have to die.....?!"

He suddenly recalled that shy smile of Iori.

--- I want to protect Senri.

The teenage boy who said so, was smiling shyly. Although it was just a simple dream, he treasured the relationship between the five of them more than anyone else, he also wanted to protect Senri properly, more than anyone else.

--- That's why, if I were to become a Mushitsuki just like Iori...

The teenage girl who said that line was probably hiding her feelings from Iori right? She herself probably hadn't noticed that whenever she talked about Iori, she had her happiest smile.

Just then, (Konoha)'s voice came from the wireless headset.

"Confirmed Kusuriya Daisuke --- East Central Division's Kashu level one ranked member, (Kakkou)'s engagement. Requesting Headquarters for immediate counter-measures."

"(Kakkou)...!"

Ishimaki censured with a despaired tone.



“Why did you... Do you even know what you’re doing right now?”

“Then what do you want me to do?!”

Daisuke roared:

“Why did Iori and Azu had to die?! They were just normal high school students! Azu is not even a Mushitsuki! Why did they have to --- die here like this? I don’t understand anymore!”

Daisuke continued to pull the trigger as he roared at the ceiling:

“They just wanted to protect Senri.....!”

His vision began to slowly distort; the tears that he hadn’t felt in a few years began to overflow. He thought that his tears had already dried up during the process of turning countless Mushitsuki into Fallen.

Housawa Town --- a very comfortable place that centered on Senri; and in that town was Iori, Azu, and Akatsuki. The days that he spent with them in Housawa Town was very warm and peaceful, even Daisuke himself thought that it, perhaps, may have been the place where he belonged.

However, this kind of ending was just too tragic. What have they done wrong? They just wanted to follow their dreams... wanted to protect a girl and yet ---

“Ohhhh!!!”

Every time he fired a bullet, his body would feel the strong recoil. After shooting, around 30 bullets, there was nothing in the carriage that could move.

“Why...”

Looking down ahead, was a teenage boy staring at the floor dazedly with his empty eyes. It was Kanari Yoichi whom had lost his (Mushi) and became a Fallen. Daisuke had already seen those doll-like emotionless eyes countless times already.

“What ... are we? Why can we only fight like this?...”

The confusion that he should’ve gotten rid of a few years ago began to awaken in his heart once again.

Thinking back at it, it had probably started the moment when Tachibana Rina died drearily as the leader of (Mushibane).

Rina was just like another Daisuke.

She harbored the same dream as Daisuke; although she was at a loss, she still fought on endlessly.

However his own confusion, and the dilemma of them sharing the same dream yet different perspectives, forced Daisuke to kill Rina.

Daisuke input more force into the hand that was gripping the revolver as he spoke with a quivering voice.

"I'm going to defeat (The Original Three), and end this idiotic war...!"

Just then, a new voice came from the wireless headset.

"The Central Headquarters will be taking in charge of the current mission from now on. In addition, the headquarters has identified (Kakkou) as a target of elimination. The Annihilator should be in contact with him very soon."

It was a voice that made Daisuke feels disgusted and uncomfortable. He had some impression of the voice; it should be the voice of Commissioner Inose from the Central Headquarters.

Annihilators ---

They should be the squad that ( C ) mentioned about before; a squad that served directly under the command of the head direction of the SEPB.

Just then, Ishimaki retorted:

"Commissioner Inose! That order is just too outrageous! The East Central Division didn't agree on this!"

"This is my judgment under such emergency situation. (Kakkou) right now is in an extremely unstable mental state; hence I can only conclude that he is a dangerous factor that needs to be eliminated, am I wrong?"

" ... "

The revolver that had fused with the Kakkou Mushi spat out an empty magazine, after that, Daisuke took out a replacement magazine and snapped it back in.

He then aimed at the ceiling of the carriage and pulled the trigger. After a loud bang, a big hole that could allow a person to jump through was blasted onto the ceiling.

With a jump, Daisuke landed on the ceiling of the carriage.

Sharp, needle-like, heavy raindrops stormed against him; along with the gale that could stop anyone from breathing.

He gazed at a far distance through the goggles that were soaked by the rain.

Whether or not he could stop the new bullet train didn't matter anymore; right now with the current situation, the best plan was probably allowing the train to charge straight into Ouka City and gain support from the East Central Division. That was probably the plan with the highest successful rate if he wanted to save Senri.

"Please tell the East Central Division's members to stand by near the border... So that after entering Ouka City, they can protect Senri and escape at once."

“Ohh... Judging from those words and actions of yours, I can nail the fact that you’re essentially rebelling. (Kakkou)!”

“Stop it...(Kakkou)! Are you trying to face the elimination squad all by yourself?! The Central Headquarters now is completely different than the one few years ago; back when they were unable to control you and (Fuyuhotaru)!”

(Fuyuhotaru).

Ishimaki’s one line caused Daisuke to close his eyes.

*Shiika ---*

Daisuke then opened his eyes and glared at the view in front, at the direction where the Annihilators were coming.

“(Konoha) reporting... Just now, I have confirmed (Kaguya)’s, who is engaging at the end of the train, abnormality. Judging from speculated results, it should be signs of Maturation.”

“Akatsuki.....”

Even if Akatsuki had strength comparable to a Kashu level two ranked, there was only so much he could do facing hundreds of (Mushitsuki) members all by himself.

The new bullet train continued to speed through the rainstorm. Behind them was (Mushibane), and in front of them, was the elimination squad from the SEPB; meanwhile the teenage girl that they were protecting was at the middle.

“Senri..... I promised that I will protect you.....”

In front of Daisuke that was vowing quietly from the beating of heavy rain, something abnormal happened.

In the far distance, up ahead, a shining-red glow suddenly appeared.

“.....?”

The shining-red glow gradually expanded --- No, it was actually flying at a great speed toward the new bullet train Daisuke was standing on.

When Daisuke saw that the red glow that was flying at high-speed towards him, he trembled.

“It can’t be.....!”

The shining-red glow was an actually a roaring flame.

Accompanied by the sound of “Boom!”, the strong impact and vibration resulting from the roaring flame striking the train, exploded in front of Daisuke. The whole train shook from this as it screeched intense metal sounds against the tracks.

The flame soon filled Daisuke’s vision.

And then, under Daisuke’s stunned gaze, the outline of the roaring flame began to distort into a beetle-like creature that had a pair of uneven long tusks; very similar to tiger beetle.

The host of this flaming (Mushi) was standing leisurely on the side; it was a figure with hair the same hue as the flame itself. A domineering atmosphere as well as the flames could be felt coming from the figure's body; creating an overwhelming presence that made one hardly believe he was actually a human.

The teen, whom was wearing a heavy coat with a large amount of bandage wrapped around his face, spoke:

“Let’s slaughter each other, (Kakkou)!”

“Harukiyo...!”

Daisuke took a step back against the overwhelming heat wave that was storming at him.

The roaring heat instantly evaporated the rain that had wet Daisuke as a droplet of sweat shed from his neck.

*Why... Why did Harukiyo appear with such timing?...*

Harukiyo --- Despite his ability being completely unknown, he was still classified as an Ishu level one ranked Mushitsuki; one of the strongest Mushitsuki. He is the leader of the third organization that consists of a few but elite and capable members, completely different than the SEPB and (Mushibane).

“Did Yoichi die already? --- Huh, ah? You only turned him into a Fallen? (Kakkou), you’re still naïve as ever!”

After Harukiyo gazed at the interior of the carriage through the big holes, he laughed with a deep tone.

Daisuke’s expression suddenly changed.

“He is your comrade...? Harukiyo.”

“He was quite strong, wasn't he? But against you, he is far from enough.”

“Why are you targeting Senri...?!”

Upon seeing Daisuke raising his revolver, Harukiyo twitched his shoulders and laughed:

“It’s nothing. I’m just interested in those who had the same ability as me, that’s all.”



“You’re different from Senri, be gone from my sight immediate, or else...”

“be gone huh...? Hey, Ume, what should we do?”

“Mmh --- Rejected!”

A teenager’s high pitch tone suddenly came from above Daisuke.

“...!”

Daisuke felt a murderous intent; the moment when he raised his head, he pulled the trigger.

“Oh ya, (Kakkou) you still don't know my ability right?”

A beetle, that was giving off silver aura, was dancing its wings on top of Daisuke. On top of the beetle, a teenage boy that seemed rather androgynous could be seen. The teenage boy had rather strange clothing; the parts around his arms and trousers were torn off.

Kusezaki Ume, one of Harukiyo’s comrade.

“(Kakkou), the mirror has reflected you...”

The silver colored (Mushi)’s abdomen reflected Daisuke’s face like a mirror, immediately after that, the bullet Daisuke fired was absorbed by the mirror on the beetle’s abdomen.

In an instant, the silver-colored (Mushi) fired an even stronger bullet from the mirror on its abdomen.

“Uaghh...!”

Daisuke was unable to completely evade the short-ranged bullet, although the long coat prevented the bullet from piercing through, the bullet that was filled with overwhelming power send Daisuke flying.

That was obviously the bullet that Daisuke fired; Daisuke was sent flying by his own bullet as he rolled a several times on the car ceiling.

He gripped tightly onto the protuberance on the 2<sup>nd</sup> car’s ceiling to narrowly prevent himself from falling off the car.

Just then, a pair of uneven roaring flame tusks came straight at Daisuke who was putting up a painful expression.

“Ugh.....!”

Daisuke immediately raised his revolver and fired a bullet.

In that instant, the large amount of flames leaped toward him. Daisuke managed to divide the coming flame into two currents with the high-speed gyrating bullet that he fired. The flame that was split into two, struck the wire poles on the side and melted them down almost instantly.

Although Daisuke managed to dodge Harukiyo's direct attack, if he hadn't been wearing his long coat, he would definitely end up severely injured.

"Harukiyo.....!"

"(Kakkou), just struggle as hard as you can! I'll roast your dream until there's nothing left!"

Daisuke glared at Harukiyo, who was grinning leisurely, and Ume as he clenched his teeth tightly.

Touko Part 4

The ward's door was opened.

On the ward's sickbed, a pale-faced young man could be seen slumbering.

As for Touko, she was standing weakly in front of the closed door.

The ward was very quiet. The intubator that stretched out from Haji's mouth was connected onto the machine next to the sickbed.

Touko was hesitating in front of the door. She couldn't bring herself to walk closer to Haji; if she was to walk any closer toward the sickbed, she would definitely grab onto him and never let go.

"Haji-senpai..."

Touko still hesitated. She stared into the space rather than looking at Haji while murmuring to herself.

She had also forgotten to take off the wireless headset from her ear. Ever since she came here, the wireless headset had been giving nothing but dialogue filled with despair.

"Why must we ---"

Daisuke's roar could be heard from it.

"Confirmed (Kaguya)'s abnormality, it should be signs of Maturation and ---"

She could also hear (Konoha)'s emotionless voice.

The Annihilators from the Headquarters should be arriving there shortly. Once they arrive, not only Senri, but Daisuke would also be regarded as a target of elimination and subject to annihilation.

"I-I... really... can't do anything at all..."

She continued to murmur to herself in the ward.

"Why must they fight...? Why can't we save them...? Is everything my fault to being with? Because I'm different than senpai, because of my uselessness....."

The (Mushi)'s existence had slowly become a well-known truth to the public as their attitude towards Mushitsuki became even more severe than before. Even so, this reaction of the general public was very normal, because when Touko herself was attacked by the Mushitsuki, she also felt extremely scared.

But nonetheless, Touko still couldn't bring herself to hate them.



Touko felt that Mushitsuki weren't their enemies, but rather bunch of lost kids that were seeking salvation. They were imprisoned by an inexplicable darkness known as (Mushi), striving endlessly to find their dreams. The feeling of wanting to save them, was it wrong?

"Unlike senpai, I don't have any ability ... or a dream... or even a thing in which I cherish, yet even so I still wanted to save them... But... I really can't do it..."

Touko recalled Haji's figure that she last saw.

He was always filled with perseverance and strong will that would not yield no matter who the opponent was. Touko was very envious of him, and respected him from the bottom of her heart. She even entered the same university as Haji half-heartedly. Perhaps, the reason that she enrolled in such agency was also because she wanted to see his back figure?

And if she were to stand in the same position as Haji, it would be too much for her.

"Why must it be me...? Haji-senpai, please tell me..."

--- You're that type that would try to muddle and live through life right? Other than trying to dismiss things with a wry smile, you particularly had no other desire.

She recalled the words that Haji said with a weak smile.

That's right, Touko had nothing. Not only did she not have any ability, she was not strong enough to reject the things that she disliked, nor did she harbor a dream of her own.

--- That's what I like about you

Haji immediately smiled after saying that; it was a smile of mischief that he rarely showed.

Just then, (Konoha)'s voice came from the wireless head set.

"(Konoha) reporting, Harukiyo approached the new bullet train, and started engaging (Kakkou)."

Touko twitched her shoulders upon hearing that.

*Harukiyo appeared on the new bullet train that was transporting Senri...? Why?*

Touko felt something was extremely off.

This obviously was not the best time— she questioned his act of showing up at such a time, trying to make sense of it all.

*Well of course, to Daisuke, his appearance is the worst scenario. But how about Senri? If Harukiyo's target was Senri, wouldn't it be best for him to wait until Daisuke and the Annihilators broke out and fought to their last breath?*

*And the most questionable thing is the reason why Harukiyo suddenly appeared?*

*Is his target really Senri? What are his motives on wanting to obtain Senri? If there are other possibilities, then there's only ---*

“.....”

Touko widened her eyes.

As she came to a conclusion, she suddenly recalled Haji's words that he said other time.

--- Just because you're one those types that simply have no desire, that's why you are always be able to face everything with the same attitude. Bad things will make you feel bad, and good things will make you feel good. As long as you are able to move according to your will, then in the future --- ...

“Senpai---”

Touko raised her head up.

“I... will definitely make this place, where senpai will return, into a big mess!”

She subconsciously smiled, and then continued in her good-for-nothing tone.

*The new bullet train that Daisuke and Senri were riding on will arrive at Ouka City shortly; someone's gotta be there to end everything right?*

“I'm going to try out the things I want to do! By the time you come back, please remember to scold me okay?!”

She bowed sincerely at Haji as usual.

And then after that, she turned around and left the ward. She even forgot that she was in a hospital as she pressed onto the wireless headset and spoke against the microphone:

“Commissioner Inose, please respond. This is Goromaru speaking.”

The other party immediately responded.

“I thought you were gonna keep your mouth shut; well, what's the matter so suddenly? Let me make myself clear, this operation will not be change ---”

“Want to trade with me?”

Touko said that as she began to walk down the stairs heading to the parking lot:

“I can give the Central Headquarters our most important trump card, in return ---”

## The Others

On the roof of the train carriage, Akatsuki was kneeling weakly.

He couldn't even tell when he stopped feeling the heavy rain that was beating against his back. The pair goggles with the broken lens that was hanging off his ear, barely managed to not fall off.

Meanwhile, the golden-colored mayfly continued to project laser-like tracks in front of Akatsuki as if it had gone berserk.

“Ugh... Wooooahhh! Efemera Ahhhh!!!”

(Mushibane)’s last remaining member, Vihookumosu roared as the bee hawk moth swung its triangular antennae. However, this defense was ineffective at all; the bee hawk moth’s head was pierced through by the golden laser and evaporated.

The blond-haired teenage boy gazed dazedly at Akatsuki as he slowly fell on the roof of the new bullet train.

*Vihookumosu.....Your dream, did it only exist so that you could lose it in this meaningless war...?*

Akatsuki questioned in his heart.

*Why is everyone giving up their dreams so easily like this?*

The gradually swelling golden-colored mayfly, sounded a rebellious roar towards the sky.

Very soon, Akatsuki’s consciousness will completely fade away. Whilst his (Mushi), which had gone berserk a long time ago, will completely mature.

The mayfly, that had eliminated the (Mushibane), was writhing its body, trying to break free from its host’s binding. It continually shot out numerous light rays to destroy the buildings that were passing by.

At that moment, Akatsuki smiled weakly.

*--- Iori-kun, I fought to protect Senri until the end!*

He called for his dearest friend.

Akatsuki had finished his portion of the task; the only thing he could do now was to rely on Daisuke to finish the rest ... He prayed from the bottom of his heart while entrusting his wish onto him— since Daisuke was one of his companions that also vowed to protect Senri.

*--- Rina, I fought to protect the person I wanted to protect!*

He then conveyed his last remaining feelings to his first love that had already passed away.

That was the last droplet of Akatsuki's remaining dream.

Something was constantly disintegrating within the innermost part of Akatsuki's heart. He could no longer remember Rina's smile anymore; even the warmth given to him from Senri was rapidly fading away as well.

Akatsuki's eyes were slowly losing their luster.

"... Hear me?"

From the broken goggles came a woman's voice.

Akatsuki had thought that the wireless function had already malfunctioned, but it seemed he was just too engrossed in the battle— that's why he didn't hear anything.

With his ember of life gradually dimming away as well as his consciousness, he listened hazy to the voice.

"I'm the East Central Division, deputy branch-director Goromaru. (Kaguya), can you hear me?"

Akatsuki couldn't even remember who this Goromaru was anymore, or to even respond.

"I have a favor to ask of you."

The woman named Goromaru continued her words:

"The East Central Division is willing to take you in as a Kashu level two ranked member; I have already received permission from the West-Southwest Division's director."

Akatsuki had no idea what was she talking about.

"Although you might be a member of the (Mushibane), according to (Konoha)'s report, the East Central Division needs you! No matter what your past was, as long as you are willing to come over, you can continue to live on!"

The woman spoke dismissively. Even though Akatsuki could only understand half of what she said, he was clear of one thing.

"You... want me... to fight on...?"

His mouth moved on its own.

Yet he himself at that moment only wanted relief.

He just wanted the mayfly to finish up his dream, and take a good rest.

"Ogata Akatsuki-san, please live on! Are you really going to end your dream here like this?! As long as you and (Kakkou) ... no, Daisuke-san are still alive, we will be able to fight on!"

“.....!”

The shattered fragments of memories began to restore one by one like flashes.

(Kakkou) ---

When Akatsuki heard that name, his eyes suddenly regained their luster.

“... (Kakkou) ... i-is Daisuke-kun?...”

“That’s right, as long as you and Daisuke-san are still --- !”

The smiling face of Rina that had disappeared once before began to flash back in Akatsuki’s mind as he widened his eyes.

Iori, Azu, and Senri’s faces, as well as other memories began to restore like endless waves as well.

“(Kakkou) ---”

Even the golden-colored mayfly that had gone berserk had suddenly stopped moving as well.

“(Kakkou) Ahhhh!!!”

Akatsuki sounded a raging roar.

“Daisuke-kun... is that true? Are you really (Kakkou)? Y-You’re the one... that killed Rina?...”

Akatsuki shouted facing the goggle.

After a short silence, Daisuke’s voice came from the headset.

“... Mhm, that’s right. I was the one that killed Rina.”

Perhaps he was in the middle of a battle? Although he was panting painfully, he still answered.

“(Kakkou).....!”

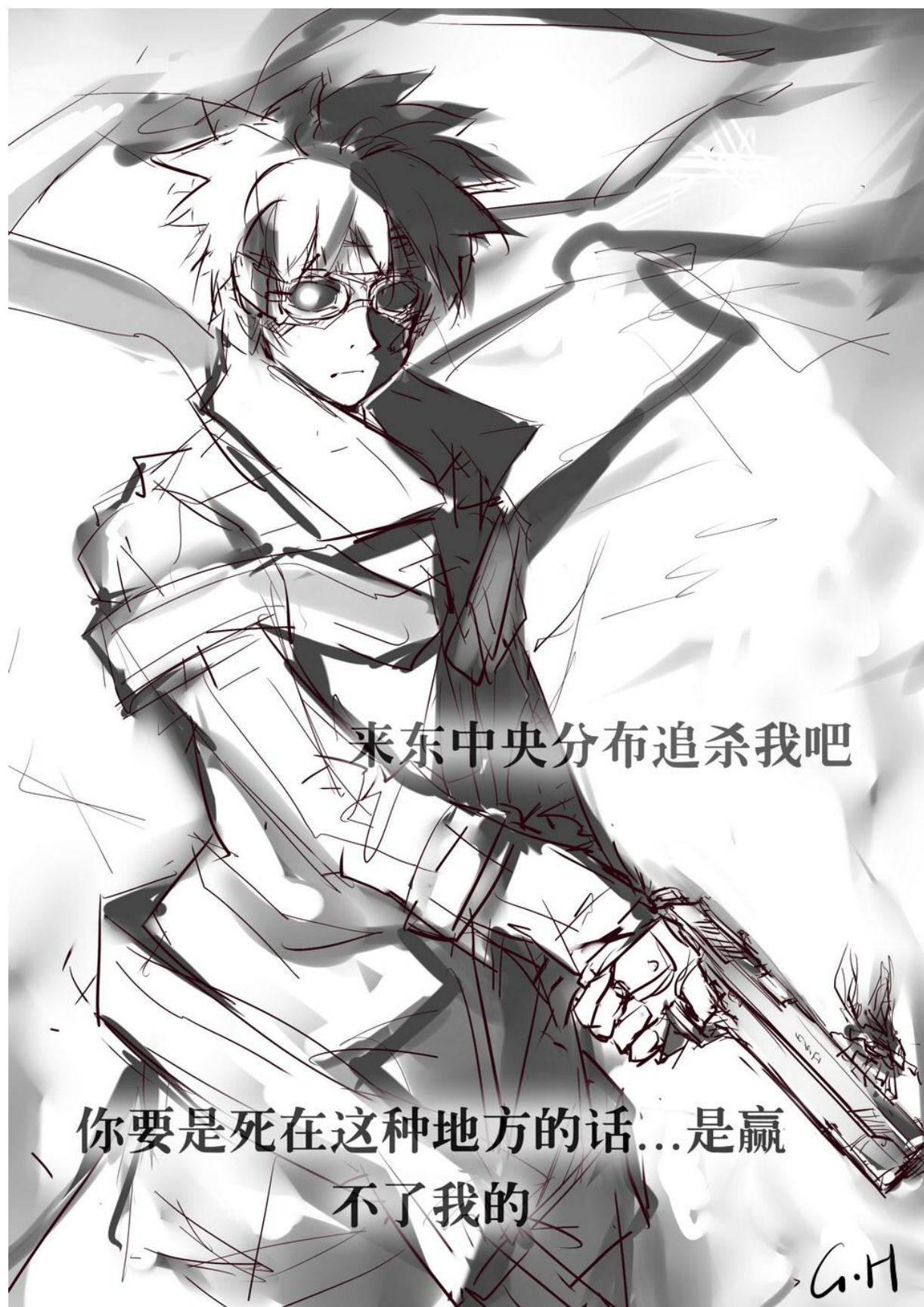
“Do you want to avenge Rina?”

“Of course! (Kakkou), I’ll kill you! I’ll fucking kill you!”

Akatsuki roared with a hoarse voice:

“Rina she...! Rina she was our hope! She fought for the sake of creating a place where we could belong!  
And yet you...!!!”

“Then come to the East Central Division to kill me!”



来东中央分布追杀我吧

你要是死在这种地方的话...是赢  
不了我的

G.H

Daisuke's voice was filled with demonic mockery; as least that was what Akatsuki felt when he heard them.

"If you're going to die here like this, then you will never be able to win against me. Rina was much stronger than you."

"...!"

Because of the overwhelming rage, Akatsuki's hand that was holding the goggles, trembled non-stop.

*This guy... only this guy, I'll definitely finish off with my own hands...!*

"Come to the East Central Division, and protect Senri until the end!"

The mayfly, that was planning on maturing, gave a loud howl towards the sky. Its long howl felt as if it was regretting that it missed the chance to rebel, but also felt as if it was rejoicing the return of its host.

The mayfly's body gradually shrank and returned to its original size, before flying next to Akatsuki who was grabbing tightly onto the roof.

"(Kakkou)...!(Kakkou)...!"

Akatsuki began to crawl forward on the roof that was being beat furiously by the heavy rain, advancing toward the front cars, moving forward to the direction where Rina's hateful enemy was at.

*I'll live on... until the day I kill you... I will not die!*

Although he was clenching his teeth due to resentment, it seemed like it was near his limits already.

His arms and legs began to lose energy like a circuit being cut off.

And then slowly, Akatsuki fell onto the roof, and passed out.

## The Others

In the carriage that was enveloped by silence, Senri awakened.

“Mm.....”

Her head felt drowsy and she felt like she had a fever.

*Why did my condition suddenly deteriorate like this?... It will only make Dai-kun and others worry...*

Senri propped up her exhausted body, and immediately felt something was wrong.

There was completely no sign of anyone moving.

For a moment, she thought that the new bullet train had arrived at the Ouka City, and everyone else had disembarked already. However, the seat that she touched was clearly the new bullet train's seats; she could even hear the sound of train speeding on the tracks and its vibration.

“Dai...kun...?”

She continued to reach her hands outwards; muttering:

“Uuh.....!”

A painful headache throbbed against her head. And because of this pain, her drowsy consciousness was awakened.

She then tried to recall the memories before she fell asleep.

After Senri's condition worsened, the first ones that left her side were Iori and Akatsuki. The attitude they had when they parted seemed different than usual.

And then the next one that left was Azu, Senri could only remember a little up until that part; she said she was going to look for Iori.

Where did Daisuke go then? Before Senri lost consciousness, it seemed like something terrible had happened, yet she couldn't remember any of it.

“Iori-kun.....? Azu-chan... Akatsuki-kun...?”

She reached her hand to touch the seat next to her, but it was empty.

Senri immediately fell in panic.



She had said so to everyone before; to herself, everyone was like the ground... These words meant exactly that—As long as everyone was by her side, Senri could go anywhere she wanted; but in contrast, if they were not around her, Senri would immediately feel scared and worry where everyone had went.

*This won't help ---*

Senri bit her lips.

If she were to act pessimistic, it would make everyone worry. If she were to put up any uneasy expression, it would increase others' burden— It would only give those kind-hearted people troubles.

“Everyone...”

Although her head was in extreme pain, Senri still stood up and tried to look for them.

Just at that instant.

Senri felt someone was sitting on the seat on the other side, thus she asked happily:

“Dai-kun?”

But the voice that responded was nothing like Daisuke's voice; it was a beautiful voice.

“Good afternoon, Dioresutoi's (Mushi)-san. How are you?”

It was a sweet female voice that could even paralyze one's brain, and Senri didn't know her.

Just then, all of the noise disappeared from within the carriage.

Senri, who relied on hearing and touching, could keenly feel the changes within the carriage as her entire body stiffened from nervousness. It felt as if the woman's remark had brought this place into the dream world.

Senri tried to step back, but bumped into the armrest with her waist and fell onto the seat instead.

“W-Who are you...? Dio.....?”

“Me? Umm... I guess (Oogui)? Since you guys always call me that. And as for Dioresutoi, it's the thing that you guys named (Shinpu) after. Dioresutoi couldn't endure the long mission anymore, and went insane from his appetite and delusions... ... The “King of Mushitsuki” ... There's no need for such a thing!”

Senri frowned; she completely didn't understand what this woman was talking about.

Suddenly, a drowsy fatigue enveloped Senri.

“Even though your dream has already been eroded by Dioresutoi before... it still seems quite delicious!”



Just then, a soft fabric gently touched Senri's cheeks. For some reason, Senri was sure that it was a glove-wearing hand.

"My...dream..."

With her hazy consciousness, Senri muttered to herself.

"You are a Mushitsuki!"

Senri heard (Oogui)'s words, and immediately widened her eyes.

"Your (Mushi) is a very bright and warm flame ... Many people pursue your flame, and gather around your side. Those Mushi that are lost in the darkness pursue your light ... And those people frozen in the cold pursue your warmth... Yet you only use your flame to burn them down."

--- Burn..... Burn..... Make those things around you all ...

Senri recalled the dream that she had a few years ago, a dream that was the exactly the same to the one she had recently.

The only scenery that Senri knew.

The biggest horror that Senri knew.

In the dream, Senri used her flame and burned everything.

"I... am ... a Mushitsuki...?"

(Oogui) used her fingertip to gently stroke her trembling lips.

"You actually knew about it already right? When your Onii-san was by your side, when your most precious people were by your side, your (Mushi) would deprive them of their dream ---"

Thump, thump.

Senri's heart was racing.

A sense of fear was grabbing tightly onto Senri's heart.

That's right, what (Oogui) said was right --- When she was together with Onii-chan, Daisuke, Iori and others, she could feel that they were very close to herself. When they were by her side, she would feel extremely high in spirit.

But, that was all because she was devouring their dreams ---

"No... You're wrong... I-I... didn't."

Senri shook her head weakly, while (Oogui)'s chuckling stimulated her eardrums.

“Your flame will only seduce them! The happier you smile, the warmer they will feel, which will make them want to pursue you... Then, you will encase them with your flame.”

“You’re wrong... I ... didn’t mean to ---“

“Your Onii-san is currently slumbering at Ouka City, and still hovering on the edge of life and death.”

“!”

Senri’s heart violently beat against her chest.

“Onii-chan---“

“Oh look, even the (Mushi) army guarding the princess has also come to say goodbye!”

“.....Eh...?”

Something then touched Senri’s bewildered cheeks.

Although it had a hard sensation, it was surprisingly warm. Senri could hear a sound similar to low groan next to her ear.

“Seduced by the bright flame; a brave and kind boy... His dream was very delicious!”

The woman spoke in a pleasant tone.

The hard sensation moved from Senri’s cheeks onto her hands, and then gently caressed her trembling hands with its warmth as if it was trying to tell her something.

This action caused Senri to raise her head; she was familiar with this kind of rough-sensation touching her hands.

“Iori-kun...?”

Iori, whenever he held Senri’s hands, would always tightly hold onto them.

Just then, the sensation that was touching Senri’s tiny hands gradually faded away.

“The boy name Endou Iori, died for you.”

“...!”

The sensation completely vanished.

The warmth that Senri was feeling from her palms before had also vanished as if it was an illusion.

Senri could feel something within her heart collapse.

“And then, the girl that liked him also .....”

Senri was still dumbfounded, and couldn't even say a word.

Her heartbeat soared to the limit.

*Iori and Azu both... died?*

Unbelievable, there was no way she could believe it. If she were to believe, she would definitely fall apart.

"No...! No...!"

Senri used her hands to cover up her ears while shaking her head desperately; tears began to overflow as well. In order to reject the woman's voice, she intended to reject all the truth in front of her.

However, the woman's voice pierced through the hands that was covering her ears and echoed against her eardrums.

"Everyone was seduced by your dream... by your dream that is emanating glorious warmth..."

"My... dream...?"

Her chest was feeling throbbing pain one after another. Perhaps, because of the overwhelming agitation, she could feel her fragile body was screaming in pain.

"Hey, let me hear your dream!"

The woman's sweet voice gradually flowed into the deepest part of Senri's heart.

Senri's dream.

A dream that was formed for the sake of her big brother that was always worried over her.

"My dream is... to want Onii-chan to stop worrying over me, and pursue his own happiness..."

"Have you always deceived yourself with that?"

"...!"

Senri revealed a shocked expression.

What the woman said was right.

Senri actually had another dream, a dream that she had been harboring ever since she was young. Yet she herself right now didn't have the courage to say it; she was scared if she were to say her dream, everyone would leave her.

"Please stop... don't... say it! I beg you...!"

Senri could hear the sound of something burning up as the sensation of the woman's finger touching her cheeks drifted away. Senri's cheeks, that were supposed to be wet in tears, had dried up from burning currents.

"Your dream was enjoyed by that picky eater Dioresutoi, it was truly wasteful. You know, I really wanted to have a taste as well, that burning delicious dream of yours..."

The woman distanced herself away from Senri.

"Dioresutoi's child, go fulfill your dream! And then... next time, let me also enjoy your burning dream!"

After these words were let out, the sound of new bullet train speeding began to come back.

The mysterious dream-like atmosphere surrounding the area had also disappeared.

However, Senri was still shaking her head weakly.

"I-I... Everyone... Onii-chan... It is all my fault..."

Her heart was racing with a speed that she had never felt before; because it was jumping so violently, even Senri thought of fainting immediately from using up all her strength.

*Why can't it just stop ---*

This thought emerged in Senri's mind.

If she was someone that would only deprive the dreams of her big brother and precious people... If everyone was hurt because of her, then someone like her --- should just disappear.

She thought so from the bottom of her heart.

"Someone like me... should just disappear....."

The burning hot currents instantly enveloped her the moment she muttered that.

She could clearly hear something sounding a joyful roar next to her.

Accompanied by a loud sound, the bullet was fired from the revolver in Daisuke's hand.

However, before it could even reach Harukiyo who was completely enveloped in flame, it got absorbed by the silver-colored mirror Mushi halfway.

"It's no use; my mirror has reflected you, (Kakkou)!"

It was Kusezaki Ume. The abdomen of the mirror Mushi that Ume is riding on was reflecting Daisuke's pitch black-coated figure.

"Tsk...!"

Daisuke barely managed to dodge the bullet that was fired back at the most critical moment, but immediately after that, the giant burning tiger beetle stretched out its huge tusks and came leaping at Daisuke.

Although Daisuke continuously fired numerous bullets at it, the flaming (Mushi) suddenly distorted its form in front of him. Because of the storming heat wave that was closing up on him, Daisuke could only cover himself with his coat; and with him as the center, a fire storm exploded.

"Wuwaahh!"

Both Daisuke's stamina and consciousness were being pushed to their limits within the suffocating sea of flame.

He barely managed to squeeze out his energy to aim at Harukiyo and fire a bullet. The fire storm was blown away by the power of the bullet, but ---

The bullet was immediately returned by Ume's mirror Mushi and struck Daisuke's abdomen.

"Uuhahh...!"

Although this time it didn't send him flying, Daisuke was unable to endure the overwhelming impact and immediately dropped to his knees.

"Huaa...!"

"So weak, (Kakkou), you're so weak! Where's that spirit of yours when you defeated the (Ladybird)?"

Harukiyo, who was manipulating the soaring flame, laughed leisurely as he lowered his head to despise Daisuke. Meanwhile, Ume was chuckling next to him on his silver-colored mirror Mushi.

“Your dream is only worth so much?”

Facing Harukiyo who mocking at him, Daisuke stood up with his trembling legs.

The battle against Harukiyo was simply a unilateral massacre; Daisuke had to dodge the attacks of the flaming (Mushi) that his bullets were ineffective against as he tried to attack its host, Harukiyo. But every single one of his attacks was reflected back by Ume.

Daisuke’s body was completely covered in injuries already. The attacks made by Harukiyo, and the bullets that were reflected back had almost broken through the long coat that he was wearing. Probably one or two more attacks and it would be over.

It was even worse inside the coat; Daisuke could feel that at least one or two bones within his body were broken. The sweat droplets that were mixed with his blood were running down his face that was covered by the goggles.

“.....!”

Daisuke noticed the numerous columns of buildings in the distance, and looked up.

Those were Ouka City’s buildings; as long as they could get there, there would be reinforcements from the East Central Division. Even for the Central Headquarters, they were not allowed to engage in other district’s areas without permission from the local Division.

*As long as we could get there ---*

Daisuke focused his consciousness and prepared to make his final wave of attacks, but a question suddenly surfaced within his mind after he gazed at the Ouka City that was in the distance and Harukiyo.

“The head director’s Annihilators are still not here...?”

The order to mobilize at once should’ve been issued, yet there was still no sign of them despite the fact that the train was about to reach the Ouka City, which was under East Central Division’s jurisdiction. Even though their target was Daisuke, there was no way they would allow Harukiyo to go roam free in front of them. As long as they were here, they would be able to last some time before arriving at Ouka City.

“Annihilators?”

Harukiyo seemed to have heard Daisuke’s mutter; he opened his mouth and said that as he showed a meaningful smile with his bandaged-covered face.

“Those guys’ motto seems to be “be on time”!”

A thunder-like impact ran down Daisuke’s spine.

“Oui, Harukiyo.....”



“Nn...?”

Harukiyo raised his chin up with an expression as if something fun is going to happen. Daisuke felt this action of his was extremely unusual.

“Didn’t you say you were interested in Senri? Then why don’t you stop this new bullet train?”

“...”

“No matter how I think about it, if your target was Senri, then wouldn’t it be best to stop this train at once? However, Kanari Yoichi seemed to have not wanted that to happen, that’s why he stayed at the first carriage.....”

As if someone was muttering their analysis next to his ear, Daisuke could feel the hidden hint slowly being revealed bit by bit.

Daisuke, who was widening his eyes, began to piece all the abnormalities that happened within this mission as well as all of his doubts together within his mind. And then, the conclusion that he came up was too unexpected that he could not help but feel chills running down his spine.

“The Annihilators... are already in front of me right...? The reason why there wasn’t any information in regard to Harukiyo in the Central Headquarters’ database was also because of this...?”

Daisuke muttered those words as if he was daydreaming. Meanwhile, the figure that was standing in front of the bewildered Daisuke --- Harukiyo, was crossing his arms in front of his chest while smiling leisurely.

“This mission... The Headquarters, from the start, had intended to corner me into a dead end, and then eliminate me ---“

“We will annihilate every enemy, and then obtain everything we want.”

Harukiyo showed a complacent smile as he interrupted Daisuke:

“(Kakkou), in my eyes, you’re nothing but a tiny bug.”

Daisuke gazed at the laughing Harukiyo; something felt really strange.

The teenager standing in front of him is very strong, his strength is absolutely sufficient to be ranked as an Ishu level one. But in Daisuke’s eyes, he could not help but feel that this red-haired teenager is missing something.

“You... Are you really Harukiyo?”

Harukiyo heard Daisuke’s question, and put away his smile.

“Who else do you think I am?”

The flaming giant tiger beetle roared as the flame that formed its body grew even bigger; it intended to attack Daisuke from above.

Daisuke raised his revolver, yet he didn't aim at the flaming (Mushi), but rather at Harukiyo and fired.

“(Kakkou), it's no use ---“

The silver-colored mirror Mushi moved in front Harukiyo.

However, the bullet brushed past Ume's cheek instead.

“Eh.....?”

Ume's cheek spewed few droplets of blood as he immediately turned his head around.

The bullet that Daisuke fired pierced through the wire pole that was standing next to the track. The concrete pillar slowly fell over onto the track of the train.

“Wo... Ahhh...!”

The flaming (Mushi) used its uneven tusks to bite onto Daisuke, trying to tear him apart. The intense pressure was crushing against Daisuke's abdomen.

Just then, the fallen wire pole struck against the head of the new bullet train.

A large amount of cement debris and soil dust accompanied by severe vibrations enveloped the first carriage.

“Woooahhh!”

Daisuke squeezed out the rest of his remaining strength, and pushed open the giant tiger beetle's fangs with brute force. The moment when he landed onto the roof of the carriage, he charged straight at Ume who was covered by the soil dust screen.

“...!”

The instant when Ume noticed Daisuke, he had already raised his clenched left fist. Not giving the mirror Mushi a slightest chance to dodge, he smashed his fist into the abdomen of the Mushi that had lost its luster due to the soil dust.

“Ugah.....!”

Daisuke's strengthened fist blasted through the mirror Mushi's body; Ume, whose body was covered by the large amount of fluid spewed out from the mirror Mushi, distorted into a painful expression.

Without any hesitation, Daisuke raised his revolver to aim at Harukiyo.

The shot rang loudly throughout the surroundings.

The bandage-covered Harukiyo widened his eyes.

The bullet that Daisuke fired, without the slightest deviation, accurately hit the red-haired teenager between the eyes. Harukiyo's slender body, accompanied by the sound of some kind of object crumbling apart, began to fall backward.

Like a doll that had its strings cut, he began to slowly fall backward onto the roof of the carriage.

However --- Harukiyo's body that was supposed to have fallen onto the roof, suddenly stopped its falling; and then just like the rewind function of a video, it began to rise into its standing posture.

In front of Daisuke, an abnormal figure with his left arm and face crumbled apart was standing still. He then noticed a pair of dark-colored pupils were staring straight at him from within the broken body.

Before the speechless Daisuke, Harukiyo's body began to \*Para Para\* split apart to two sides; a long-black-haired teenage girl could be seen inside.

"Sakaki... Haruka...!"

Daisuke squeezed out those words with a groaning sound; that teenage girl was Harukiyo's comrade.

"It's... not Harukiyo...?"

Due to the violent collision between the wire pole and the new bullet train, the connection part between the train and the tracks was distorted. The new bullet train sounded a sharp metallic noise as it gradually slowed down.

"Ouka City is near...! Haruka, let's retreat!"

Ume, who was distorting his expression in pain, jumped onto the mirror Mushi that was spewing out body fluid.

At the same time, Haruka, who was wearing Harukiyo's remaining body figure, was enveloped completely in flame.

"I'll remember this....."

After she said that line with a low voice, Daisuke's vision was covered by the soaring flame.

The clumps of flame immediately disappeared in front of Daisuke who was shielding his eyes with his arm; meanwhile, the mirror Mushi that Ume was riding also flapped its wings and flew away unsteadily.

The new bullet train that had lost control completely came to a halt.

"Ugh....."

Daisuke, who was completely exhausted, suddenly fell into a roll on the roof of the carriage. Through the hole that he blasted before, he fell back inside the carriage.

The train's current location was just a bit before arriving at Ouka City's border.

"Huaa... Huaa..."

Daisuke trudged towards the latter cars as he used the wall to support himself.

*Haji, what the hell is going on...?*

Within his mind, he questioned his former supervisor.

*Did you know what exactly is happening within the Special Environmental Preservation Bureau...?*

Kusezaki Ume and Haruka were both Harukiyo's comrades, if they were a part of the Central Headquarters that had not been made to public to other divisions like what Daisuke had suspected; then presumably their leader --- Harukiyo was also ... ---

"I can't let them do whatever they want..."

Daisuke clenched his teeth; the taste of blood filled his mouth.

"I will definitely live on.....! I'll live on without hurting anyone anymore...!"

Daisuke didn't know who his enemy was, was it (The Original Three)? Or (Mushibane)? Harukiyo? Or maybe, including the Special Environmental Preservation Bureau that was supposed to be his allies, all of them were his enemies.

However, Daisuke was still alive. Even though he was trudging forward with his legs; even though the tracks that he left behind were filled with blood, he was still biting onto his teeth and lived on.

Just like what Harukiyo... No, What Haruka said. Perhaps, Daisuke was nothing but a tiny bug.... But he --- They Mushitsuki had dreams that they would never give up on.

"I'm not gonna let anyone..."

Passing through the 3<sup>rd</sup> car that was enveloped by the spider webs, he stepped into the 4<sup>th</sup> car that the normal civilians were at. All of the passengers in the 4<sup>th</sup> car had already passed out; it was probably due to their consciousness being eaten by Senri's (Mushi).

"... Senri..."

Daisuke was panting heavily. After he arrived at the carriage where Senri was supposed to be, he became dumbfounded.

Senri was gone.

The seat where Senri was sitting before had been completely melted down from the burning flame; on the wall of the carriage, a hole with a size that could allow a person to walk through could be seen as well.

Daisuke leaned his body through the hole to see the outside, and immediately gasped.

Every view that could be seen from the location of the new bullet train was soaring with raging flames just like mirages.

In the direction of the burning city, one could see the outline of a (Mushi) that was formed by the flame, roaring loudly at the sky filled with heavy rain.

5.00

Senri - The Last -

Senri wandered through the streets as she shed one tear after another.

There was not the slightest sound coming from her surroundings; the area was quiet to the point where it would make people feel terrified.

She didn't know where she was at; she also didn't know where she was supposed to go. She only felt that she had to get away from the train, if she were to stay there, she would definitely hurt Daisuke and others.

"...Because of me... Everyone was..."

Since she didn't bring her cane, she could only use her hands to follow the wall and move on, walking aimlessly in the heavy rain.

The Senri right now could clearly feel the other existence that was living inside her. Her other self that was eagerly wriggling as if it was hoping for something, clinging tightly against her heart.

Actually, ever since a long time ago, she had already been in fear of her other self that existed quietly in the deepest part of her heart. To her, it felt like nothing more than a monster that wanted to break free and create chaos.

"Iori-kun... Azu-chan..."

Tears fell endlessly.

Iori.

The teenage boy that was always worried about Senri more than anyone else, and had been protecting her ever since their encounter one year ago. After enrolling in the same school, he had always been by Senri's side; a kind and gentle boy.

Azu.

She was the closest friend that Senri ever made in her life; because both of them were girls, they talked about a lot of random things together. Things like school, family, and relationships. Whenever Senri was with her, she felt like any other ordinary girl.

"Akatsuki-kun..."

Akatsuki.

A very well-behaved teenage boy, but it seemed like he always suppressed himself. Although sometimes he would show that strong-willed side of him, it felt as if he was trying to suppress that as well. Senri felt that he must have some secret hidden within himself.

“Dai-kun.....”

Daisuke.

A mysterious teenage boy who had appeared in front of her a few years ago. He was always very gentle, sometimes serious, and occasionally would show a sorrowful expression. Although Daisuke had many different personas, whenever he was by Senri’s side, he would always show that gentle and kind side of him to make her feel very warm.

And then ---

“Onii-chan.....It’s also my fault that Onii-chan ----?”

Haji Keigo.

To Senri, he was the most important person in this world; the person that had been protecting her ever since birth. And yet... even now he was also hurt.

The heavy rain that stormed down from the sky was beating against Senri as if it was punishing her. If God really did exist, he would probably never forgive a devil like Senri right? She herself had been constantly putting others that care for her in pain; why would someone like her be allowed to exist?

Just then, Senri violently coughed a few times as she dropped to her knees; her head was feeling extremely painful. Her body's condition worsening had thrown her off balance.

However, she was still clinging against the wall. She stood up with her trembling legs and continued forward.

If one were to ask her why was she walking, Senri would definitely answer this without any hesitation:

--- For the sake of not meeting anyone... not hurting anyone and to die...

“I am... the Flame... I seduced everyone... and burned them...”

Senri subconsciously muttered the words that (Oogui) had said.

She was walking perplexedly in the silent streets.

Burning air currents completely surrounded Senri. Although she tried to stay away from the burning currents by walking desperately, the burning currents seemed to have enveloped the entire city; she could never escape from it.

The unknown roar was echoing through the town.

Just then, there was a ringing in the distance.

Senri raised her head.

She'd heard this sound before, but couldn't remember from when and where she'd heard it from.

The sound continued to ring loudly in a repeating pattern.

"....."

Senri's legs began to move toward the direction of the sound.

The sound rang again.

The closer she got to the sound, the denser the surrounding air felt. It caused Senri's fragile body to feel even more stressed.

Although Senri tripped a few times, she didn't stop. She continued to walk as if she was walking voluntarily towards death itself.

The sound rang out even louder in front of her.

"...Chur...ch..."

Senri was very sure she knew this place.

It had appeared in her dream before, the only scenery that she knew; she was clear that it was right in front of her.

"Cometh... Cometh inside the (Church)..."

The voice that was exactly the same from the one in her dream was calling out to her.

Senri continued onward as if she was being guided; her hands that reached outward suddenly touched an object. The object had a rough sensation; Senri used her fingertips to touch its dry surface. As the wind began to blow, a noise came from above.

".....Tree?..."

Aside from the (Church), this was the other object that she knew. The image of the giant tree that she once saw in her dream being blown by the wind and making rustling sounds, began to surface within her mind.

"Cometh... O child of Flame..."

Under the guidance of the voice, Senri walked away from the tree. She raised both of her hands as she moved forward; the surface that she was walking on suddenly became hard.

Behind her, the sound of a door closing came as the ringing echoed against her surroundings.



Senri used up all her energy and slowly kneeled down.

"In the end... there is but only you..."

The unknown voice continued:

"Thou art the Flame that shall incinerate everything... the light that shall indulge upon human dreams..."

Senri's expression distorted.

"No... I don't... want to hurt anyone anymore..."

"Thou art the Flame....."

"I...I..."

"Thou art the Flame....."

"I am... the Flame..."

Tears were overflowing nonstop. Although Senri tried to control her tears by pressing against her eyes with her hands, the tears just wouldn't stop. They were overflowing through the cracks of her slender fingers.

*Stop, if I keep on crying like this, Onii-chan will be worried, Dai-kun will be uneasy, also Iori, Azu, and Akatsuki will be troubled.*

"Thou art the Flame..."

Senri widened her eyes.

She couldn't take it anymore.

The emotions that she had been suppressing before, as well as the mask that she had been wearing to hide her true identity, all began to crack and fall apart.

"I ... actually knew I was hurting everyone..."

Senri muttered with a low voice:

" 'twas ye that didst seduced them...They sought thy warmth..."

"Because... I'll be scared if I'm by myself! I'll be lonely! All I can see is pitch black darkness, and I can't do anything on my own...! I just want someone to be my side!"

The shackles of rationality were released; Senri could no longer control herself anymore. A sobbing voice came out from the bottom of her throat as she cried desperately:

"I actually didn't want Onii-chan to pursue his happiness! I just wanted him to forever stay by my side!  
B-Because... He is always so gentle!"

"Thy flame... shalt burn those who pursue you....."

"Dai-kun and Iori-kun... They are also very gentle! But... I'm so scared... I'm always worrying if they would just leave me and go away... If that's how it's going to be, then I should've been all alone from the start.....! But... everyone is... so warm... I can't bear to leave them..... I only hoped that they would stay by my side..... I clearly knew... that I was going to be a burden to them...!"

Something was moving erratically in Senri's surrounding.

"I clearly knew... that I wouldn't be able to do anything in return for them...!"

Senri's hair was blown into the air as the burning currents surrounded her.

"Ohh... I can feel it...! Thy flame that shall devour the humans' dreams...! Delicious, so delicious...!"

Senri could hear the voice trembling with joy.

She used her hands to cover her face, moaning:

"I only know how to obtain warmth from everyone... but I couldn't do anything in return for them...  
Even so, I still hoped everyone would stay by my side... I wanted to be together with everyone....."

Every time when her big brother treated her gently, she would be very happy. Even though she knew that she couldn't act overly spoiled, she still clung onto the time she spent with her big brother. But in actuality, Senri had an indelible fear within her heart. She feared that one day Keigo would get tired of her, and would end up leaving her --- who couldn't do anything besides accepting, and go away.

It was the same fear with Daisuke, Iori and others. Staying by their side was very warm, very comfortable, and even though she was harboring the fear of losing them one day, Senri still didn't want to give up that kind of place of belonging.

However, this feeling of Senri that made her want to stay with them, would only hurt others. As long as she stayed by those people's side, she would continuously deprive them of their dreams...

She was just like a parasite that lived off them.

The instant Senri thought of that, desperation pushed her into the endless pit of sorrow.

As long as she could stay with her big brother, together with Daisuke, or together with Iori and others, she would feel her vitality being recovered.

But that was actually an illusion; the reason why she lived was because she was eroding their dreams.

"The reason why I'm alive..... was all because of these little tricks I pulled..."

Senri had wondered before, how would someone like her, who was born with such fragile body, be able to live on? She thought that it was because of her big brother protecting her, that it was because of the people that she encountered like Daisuke, that she was able live on through her own will.

But it was nothing like that.

She was living because she deprived them of their dreams.

A sentence almost slipped out of Senri's mouth.

It was a sentence that had been living in the deepest part of her heart since long ago; if she were to say it, it would be the same as betraying those that were protecting her, as well as surrendering to her own weakness, and would declare the end.

Hence, she instinctively resisted to think about that sentence.

But the Senri right now couldn't find any reason to stop herself from saying it.

--- I want to die...

However, the second before she was about to say that line, an impact as strong as an earthquake shook Senri.

“.....!”

Senri raised her head; she could tell that the owner of the voice had just shaken, judging from the change in atmosphere.

The vibration that felt like a cannon being fired at an extremely close range, continued to reverberate as if it was venting its anger. The intense attack resounded alongside the sound of something falling apart.

“Ri---“

There was a sound.

“...Ri...!”

Senri muttered with a surprised tone.

“Dai...kun...?”

That was Daisuke's voice; Senri was unable to tell where it was coming from; it sounded close yet also sounded far at the same time.

While Senri stayed dumbfounded, the cannon-like sound reverberated.

“... Aria·Vuarei's child huh...?”

Senri heard a voice that was filled with aversion.

“It is no use! None can crush my territory from outside...”

“---Senri!”

The moment when Senri realized it was Daisuke, she could clearly hear his voice.

“...Dai-kun...”

Senri raised her cheeks that were wet with tears, and shook her head weakly.

“Don’t... come to me... or else Dai-kun you will get hurt... just like Onii-chan...”

“My dream, I’ll give you as much as you want!”

Senri was shocked.

Daisuke had not the slightest hint of confusion in his tone; he continued to shout:

“We are not that weak to be eaten completely by this! Haji, Iori and Akatsuki were the same! So Senri..... Don’t listen to that bastard’s nonsense! Come back, Senri!”

“But...But... It was all...my fault that everyone...”

“So what?!!!”

Daisuke shouted loudly; it was the first time that Senri heard him shouting like that.

“It’s not your fault... you gave us warmth! Haven’t you noticed?! Did you not receive anything from us? Everyone likes you! Can’t you even feel that?!”

Senri gazed at the praying hands in front of her chest.



Even though her eyes couldn't see her hands, she could clearly feel it... from the holding hands, the little warmth that was stored in the deepest part of her heart.

--- Can you feel?

At that time, within the secret hideout of Housawa town, the warmth that flew over from everyone's overlapped hands could still be felt.

No matter how much the rain soaked her, no matter how hard desperation came at her, that feeling of warmth would never disappear.

Senri gently held her hands tighter, and raised her head.

"I did feel it... because it was given to me from everyone... but, I ---"

Daisuke continued to shout:

"What is your dream?!"

The praying hands' grip grew tighter.

"Everyone fought to protect you! Did you not believe in them? You were afraid of being betrayed... That's why you're always so weak. The feelings of those that fought to protect your dream, are you going to let down those feelings as well?!"

Daisuke squeezed out his voice desperately and roared. Senri could probably clearly feel the image of Daisuke shouting desperately.

"Senri, I have something that I need to tell you! Haji he... that guy wasn't hurt because of you! He loved you from the bottom of his heart..... that's why he stayed by your side! Are you going to let down Haji's feeling as well? That guy fought with his life to protect your dream..... Can you not even shout out your own dream?!"

"Onii...chan..."

A light trembling voice came from Senri's lips.

Just then, an elderly voice came from above.

"O child of the Flame, do not be confused.....! Thou art the Flame that shall burn everything... thou dost differ from Sunakozaka Azu who hath rejected me... Thou shall be the one to devour all the human beings' dreams...!"

"...Azu-chan...?"

"Come, encage everything! Encage every dream with thy flame!"

There was one day, Azu suddenly said to Senri:

--- Senri, thank you.

Senri put on a baffled expression as Azu continued to say with a slightly embarrassed smile:

--- Because of you Senri, I've become much more straightforward when praying to myself. That's why... thank you.

".....!"

Senri bit her lips.

--- Senri, thank you.

During the period when she had just enrolled into the Moira High School, Senri was feeling remorseful and worried about Iori, who she didn't get to rescue. So the instant when they met again, Senri could not help but burst into tears. Iori at that time was only holding Senri's hands tightly and said that line.

Iori ---

There was no other friend that cared about Senri more than him. He was always worrying over her more than anyone else, even more than herself. And yet Senri couldn't find any reason as to why he was so gentle towards her, and would sometimes feel uneasy because of that. However, even so, Iori still stood by the place closest to Senri.

--- Senri, thank you.

Akatsuki had also said that before. It was during their way home one day; Akatsuki suddenly cried and said that. At that time, Senri was thinking about comforting him with a smile, but it backfired and she ended up crying along with Akatsuki.

Akatsuki ---

What did the "Thank you" from that time mean? Even though Akatsuki would sometimes give off a sorrowful, lonely feeling as if he had lost something very precious to him, he would always treat Senri very gently.

Senri could not clarify if those emotions were right or wrong, and was still living in fear of change in the unknown future.

But to the Senri right now, there was one thing that she was very clear on.

The warmth that could be felt from her hands, that was the warmth given to her by her most precious people.

"I.....!"

Holding tightly with both hands, she said loudly:

“I really wanted to tell Onii-chan this...! Only this sentence... but I felt that if I were to say it, Onii-chan and those precious people who I treasured would leave me, that’s why I was scared...!”

“Stop...! I do not desire thy dream..... All I want are the weak humans' ---“

“But one day! I want to sincerely tell Onii-chan and everyone that had been protecting me!”

Did her voice reach Daisuke? Reach Iori, Azu, and Akatsuki? Reach Onii-san? Did it reach those precious people who had been fighting for the sake of protecting her? ---

“I am fine!”

A sharp sound akin to glass being shattered rang throughout.

She had always wanted to say that.

Whenever her big brother protected her; whenever many other people protected her.

If she herself were to say that line, perhaps it would make them feel at ease, but they might also leave Senri because of it.

But even so, Senri still hoped that one day; she could bravely face those precious people and say these lines:

“I can clearly... feel the warmth given by everyone from the bottom of my heart!”

Senri shouted loudly, Even though her body was at her limits already; she still squeezed out her remaining strength and shouted out.

That was Senri’s dream.

Her only wish.

“Oh---“

Groans echoed through the surroundings of the (Church).

“Ohhhhhhhh!”

Senri felt something crumbling.

In the next instant, a loud roar that was enough to tear apart one’s eardrum, rang in the distance. She didn’t know where and why that unknown thing roaring for, but she could clearly feel its roar filled with joy.

The heat surrounding Senri began to disperse as the burning currents gradually shrank down.

Finally, something touched against Senri’s cheek. It was not a flame; rather, it was a solid, big and cold sensation touching against her.



“You are.....”

Senri gently stroked the presence that was closing up on her.

She knew what that thing was; ever since a few years ago, she already knew what that sensation was.

“So you are my... (Mushi)...?”

Senri heard a beast-like low roar coming near her, yet she was not afraid at all, and rather showed a smile to the (Mushi) that was nudging against her:

“From now on, I will give you my dream. I won’t let you hurt others anymore.”

After letting out a low moan, as if it would obey, the hard sensation began to disappear.

Hearing the sound of the (Church) collapsing, Senri quietly closed her eyes ---

The (Church) that was exposed to the heavy rain began to fall apart starting from the roof.

The viscous atmosphere that had enveloped the surroundings, also gradually began to dissipate.

After the disappearance of the (Church), an old bungalow was revealed. On the building's seemingly dirty walls, was a pitch-black caterpillar. Thousands of caterpillars were peeling off from the wall and dropping onto the ground as if they had used up all their strength, before disappearing.

"Oh...Ohhh...Why.....Why doth these weak humans resist me...!"

A figure, wearing a black ragged robe, was trembling on top of the building's roof. His appearance looked like a petite elderly man with a crooked back; because of his hood, his expression couldn't be seen very clearly.

"Don't look down on humans, (Shinpu)"

The revolver made a \*kacha\* sound as it was pointed at the elderly's head from behind.

"...Aria·Vuarei's child..."

Daisuke, who was wearing a tattered long coat, continued with an indifferent tone at the motionless (Shinpu):

"We haven't weakened to the point where we need your salvation."

"Surely thou dost jest."

"So your greatest weakness is the fear of being "rejected" huh. Compared to the other two (The Original Three), you seem much more ---"

Just then, countless black caterpillars appeared out of nowhere, and began gathering around Daisuke on the roof. The caterpillars overlapped onto one another, gradually forming human figures one after another.

Many people that Daisuke had encountered before appeared and surrounded him.

Shiika, Rina, Senri, Haji Keigo as well as the figure of his mother and older sister from when he was young; and many others that he had hurt before— were charging at him endlessly.

--- Daisuke-kun.....

--- Daisuke .....

--- Dai-kun...

--- (Kakkou)... Aaahhh!!!!

Countless arms reached towards Daisuke.

“What do we have to do in order to be released from the (Mushi)?”

The large number of caterpillars were climbing onto Daisuke starting from his feet; Daisuke could feel the (Mushi) eroding his heart, causing his consciousness to rapidly become blurry.

The Kakkou Mushi that had fused with the revolver began to stir, releasing tentacles in an attempt to fuse with Daisuke’s arm.

"Thou couldst never escape from the shackles of the (Mushi)... for that would be akin to eliminating our existence..... Cometh, and fall into the abyss of despair!"

The instant the caterpillars began to crawl over Daisuke’s face (Shinpu) turned his head to face him. Daisuke then saw the black caterpillars wriggling within the hood through the gaps. Numerous wiggling caterpillars were staring straight at Daisuke.

A bell began to ring.

The caterpillars continued to multiply, and flew into the sky as the air became denser; dark clouds began to form and swirl.

A giant bell appeared in the distance, slowly rocking back and forth, enveloping the entire city with its heavy and oppressing ringing. In the sky of the entire city, an outline of the (Church) was reflected.

“Hark, I am Dioresutoi, I bring forth the salvation for weak humans' dreams. My child shall sacrifice more and more dreams to I... I welcome you all to my sanctum...”

Filthy but solemn ringing echoed throughout the entire city.

“I told you already; don’t look down on humans!”

Daisuke’s muttering was overlapped by a loud gunshot.

The bullets’ power blew away the surrounding caterpillars, and pierced through (Shinpu)’s ragged robe.

The robe was torn to pieces, as a hole was blasted into (Shinpu)’s body, revealing the outline of a giant caterpillar.

Amidst the sea of caterpillars, Daisuke raised his revolver high at the sky. Because Daisuke’s dream was being deprived by (Shinpu), the Kakkou Mushi's eye's reddened.

A cannon sound that was even louder than the ringing exploded.

Accompanied by a loud sound that could easily deafen one's eardrums, the bell that was floating in midair began to shatter.

"Ohh...Ohhhhh...!"

The place where (Shinpu)'s body was pierced spewed out a large amount of liquid; the giant caterpillar that was looking up at the sky gradually dissipated into the air.

(Shinpu)'s countless eyes stared straight at Daisuke.

"We don't need any salvation; we will find our own path of living."

The hundreds of caterpillars that were crawling all over Daisuke's body began to slowly disappear one after another.

Under Daisuke's gaze, (Shinpu)'s figure slowly became transparent along with the wind. The (Church), which had been hovering over the city, as well as the small black caterpillars had also completely vanished.

After the disappearance of the heart-eroding caterpillars, the revolver-fused Kakkou Mushi stopped rebelling. It retracted the tentacles that were fused with Daisuke's left arm, as it de-fused from its revolver form, and then landed onto Daisuke's shoulder.

The rain had stopped, and a ray of light pierced through the clouds.

"(Kakkou) reporting to the deputy branch-director..... Mhm, I just eliminated (Shinpu). That leaves two more to go..."

Daisuke pressed against the goggles, and contacted Touko through the wireless headset.

"Touko-san, I'll be taking private actions from now on..."

After confirming the reply, Daisuke cut off the connection. His consciousness immediately fell into pitch black darkness.

"Ugh..."

His body had reached its limit; in addition to the fact that Senri's (Mushi) had devoured quite a lot of his dreams, the main reason was probably the over- consumption of his dream by his (Mushi) from the many battles. Daisuke's memories became blurry as his body slowly tilted over and started rolling down the roof; he couldn't even use his legs to stand anymore.

"Uhh..."

The taste of blood and sand spread within his mouth; he could feel all his memories and dreams rapidly fading away, and he couldn't feel his arms and legs anymore.

However, he was still crawling, in an attempt to stand up.

“There... are... still... two more...”

Daisuke then imposed more strength into his trembling legs, and stood up. He clenched his teeth tightly, trying to sustain the consciousness that was gradually fading away.

“How can I stop here now...!”

Raising his head, he saw ray that shone through the clouds, which was reflected by the beach.

Walking over to the entrance of the bungalow, he opened the doors and found a teenage girl lying in the middle of the dust filled floor.

“Let’s go, Senri... We still have things to do...”

Daisuke picked up Senri, and began walking.

6.00

Touko The Last

Aside from her and the cold measuring devices, there was only silence in the room.

Sitting on a metal chair, Touko who had her eyes closed, could even hear the beating of her own heart; thumping calmly against her chest in a set rhythm.

Touko began to recall the things that had just happened.

--- Thank you very much.

After saying that line to Touko who had bowed her head in apology, the short-haired teenage girl smiled. Touko didn't expect that the teenage girl would thank her at all, so she raised her head in surprise.

--- I'll be fine.

Although it was slightly suppressed, it was a smile that could make others feel her strong will. No matter how one looked at her, the teenage girl that was reflected in Touko's eyes looked no different than a normal girl that could be found anywhere.

“...”

She slowly opened her eyes.

Accompanied by the sound of escaping air, the door that Touko fixed her gaze at, started to open.

Soaring flames bursted in.

The scorching currents blew away Touko's glasses and snapped her hair band, causing her long hair to flutter along with the storming heat.

However, Touko still remained motionless; her calm gaze stared straight at the tall slender teen that was about to enter the room.

It was a tall teen wearing a heavy coat, with a large amount of bandages wrapped around his face. The flame that was emanating from him caused the surrounding devices to melt almost instantly like chocolate. His overwhelming presence that was filled a sense of coercion was causing Touko to feel pain all over her body — as if needles were stabbed into her.

“You probably... aren't (Fuyuhotaru) right?”

The teen --- Harukiyo looked at Touko, and revealed a grin. His low voice was so cold that it would send chills down people's spine, and also sounded as if they were whispers that came directly from the abyss of hell.



Touko then calmly replied with a smile:

“Your target was (Fuyuhotaru) from the start wasn’t it?... Faking the attack on Senri, as well as letting the new bullet train charge straight into Ouka City while under the (Mushibane)’s attack... Just so that the East Central Division would focus its forces near the border; and that way, the security here would be lessened.”

Harukiyo didn’t reply; he walked closer to Touko. The furious fire storm surrounded Touko as it continued to spread and burn.

“What happened to the Central Headquarters’ guard that was protecting here?”

“Roasted.”

“But I didn’t hear any sounds of fighting or impact.”

Harukiyo didn’t answer Touko’s question, just merely raised his hand coldly at Touko’s head. Aside from the soaring flame, everything that was in between Harukiyo and Touko was burned.

“Where is (Fuyuhotaru)?”

“She was transferred to the Central Headquarters already; even if it’s you, you can’t possibly do anything on your own about it easily right?”

“Who are you?”

“Goromaru Touko, the deputy branch-director of the East Central Division.”

“Is that so? Go die then.”

A flaming clump appeared from Harukiyo’s palm.

Touko squinted her eyes.

However, the expected impact didn’t come. Touko raised her head, and exchanged glances with Harukiyo who was laughing pleasantly.

“You’re not gonna kill me?”

“No, I’m going to right now.”

“Then could you please hurry up, I’m actually so scared right now that I might even pass out before that.”

“Well, since you made it less troublesome for me, I will at least listen to your last words.”

Harukiyo said with a calm tone, and showed a smile that could send chills down people’s spine.

Touko slightly narrowed her eyes.



--- *made it less troublesome...*

After she understood the teen's remarks, Touko was no longer nervous. Although she tried to imitate Haji's cool appearance, it seemed like she still had a long way to go.

"I see, so it was like this!"

Touko relaxed her shoulders, and showed her usual good-for-nothing smile.

"The reason why the (Mushibane) had gotten a hold of Senri's Intel, as well as your appearance, and even your comrade Kanari Yoichi's action, everything was just a decoy from the "Monitor"... Everything was planned for the sake of controlling Daisuke, Shiika, and Senri arbitrarily right?"

"..."

"This plan was intended to plunder everything they wanted all at once during the absence of Haji-senpai right? So using the (Mushibane) as an excuse, the Central Headquarters began to act and tried to wrap things up nicely before Senpai awakened. It was really amazing! I'm totally beat,ahaha."

Even though Harukiyo didn't make a sound, one could still tell that he was gazing straight at Touko with a slightly impressed expression.

"However, the ending is a bit sloppy! If I were the head-director, I would just let Daisuke charge straight into the headquarters directly. As for Shiika, I would burn this facility down, and force her to come out... Ahya, it seemed like I'm getting carried away, Ahaha..."

The flame in Harukiyo's palm grew even stronger.

But Touko still didn't change her attitude.

"After all, I'm an incompetent woman."

"..."

"I couldn't even save a normal girl like Shiika; I guess I could only do some trivial stuff from now on. Even the section chief in the Ministry of Internal Affairs has scolded me four times already, saying that I'm just taking the paychecks without doing any work, but ....."

Touko squeezed the hands that were placed on her knee.

"I want to save her... Even though I only know less than a handful of Mushitsuki; whenever I see them I feel that... Even if I am so useless... I still want to protect the dreams of those children... This desire of mine, was it too conceited? Even if I could only encourage them a bit, or even if it's mocked as self-satisfaction, it's fine. But if I don't do anything... I could never forgive myself..."

Touko raised her head to gaze at the teen, and said:

"I have already decided that I'm going to fight! So, if you're going to spare my life, you guys will definitely not have it your way from this point on!"

"..."

The flame clump that the teenager raised up, suddenly emitted a brighter glow.

However ---

The flame that surrounded Touko, as well as the heat, suddenly all vanished without a trace.

Harukiyo grinned as he put down his arm. In front of the dumbfounded Touko, he turned around and walked toward the door with loud steps.

"Uh, why ---"

"What's your name?"

Harukiyo turned his head around and asked:

"You...Y-You just asked that before."

"I forgot."

Looking at Harukiyo who was showing a satisfied smile, Touko stuttered.

"Uh,I... I-I'm just a worthless government official."

"The next time we meet, I will kill you. So try your hardest to cling onto life before then, Goromaru Touko."

After seeing Touko's flushed face, the teenager seemed to be very satisfied; he swayed his long coat as he walked away.

Just when Touko was intending to refute something, a familiar voice was heard.

"(Kakkou) reporting to the deputy branch-director."

It was Daisuke's voice; Touko hurriedly placed the headset that was hooked in front of her chest to her ear.

"Daisuke-san? Did you manage to protect (Senri)? What about (Shinpu)?"

"Mhm, I just eliminated (Shinpu). That leaves two more to go....."

"... Is that so, there are still two more..."

"Touko-san, I'll be taking a private action from now on."

Daisuke was no longer using (Kakkou)'s tone, but rather Kusuriya Daisuke's.

Touko smiled.

This incident was probably playing out according to someone's plan.

But they survived.

Daisuke, Senri, Akatsuki, and Touko.

In order to fulfill and protect their dream, Daisuke and the others would probably continue to live on right? As for Touko, she would be doing whatever she could to help them.

"Mmm, I'll be right there..."

After cutting off the communication, Touko lifted her head to gaze at the charred ceiling.

She then closed her eyes.

Daisuke, Senri, (Fuyuhotaru).

The Special Environmental Preservation Bureau, (Mushibane) and Harukiyo.

Mushitsuki that hurt each other, and helped each other, how would it all end up?

"Haji-senpai..... I'll definitely destroy the current SEPB."

Touko muttered to her supervisor that was not there as if she was vowing.

"If you don't come back soon, I'll take over Senpai's place of belonging...!"

Touko's mutter, that was filled with some mischievous intent, echoed back and forth through the empty room.

## Epilogue

### A Heart

Beneath the clear sky, Daisuke was gazing at the Ouka City's street scene.

He sat atop a water tower of a white building as the long coat covering his body danced with the wind. On the tip of the revolver in his hand, a green Kakkou Mushi was leisurely stretching its wings.

"Heyo... Woah!"

Hearing a scream coming from the side, Daisuke hurriedly reached out his left hand.

"Ahaha...thank you very much, Daisuke-san."

She probably missed her step right? Touko, who was being supported by Daisuke's hand, showed her usual good-for-nothing smile.

And then she finally climbed to where Daisuke was at, and surveyed the surroundings.

"Woah, so many! They are everywhere!"

"I won't let anyone get close."

Daisuke took off his goggles, and displayed a smile.

Surrounding the white building where Daisuke was sitting at, whether it be a shadowy location or on top of another rooftop; many figures donning white long coats and goggles could be seen.

They were the Central Headquarters' special squad; their target seemed to be Daisuke and a teenage girl that was in the building.

A white-colored coated figure's sudden movement flashed through the corner of Daisuke's vision.

As if a switch was being turned on, Daisuke immediately aimed the revolver at that figure, causing him to stop almost instantly.

Touko lowered her head and looked at Daisuke with a worried expression.

"..... Daisuke-san, are you okay? You look stressed out..."

"It's nothing."

"The people surrounding here should be receiving the withdraw order very soon..... Ah, I'll help to watch this side!"

Sitting back to back against Daisuke on the water tower, Touko continued with her tensionless tone.

Although it seemed rather unreliable, Touko's temperature could be clearly felt pressing against his back.

"... I'm sorry, Daisuke-san."

After a short silence, Touko spoke:

"I gave (Fuyuhotaru) to the Central Headquarters, I don't think she'll come back to the East Central Division ever again..."

"... Shiika say anything?"

"She said 'I'll be fine'---"

"..."

"In return, Ogata Akatsuki will be transferred to the East Central Division..... In addition, I have already requested to have your penalty decreased, I think after a while it will be accepted. As for Senri who has just been officially ranked as an Ishu level two, she should temporarily be in the East Central Division's care for now... Aside from those, I really couldn't think of anything else, are you mad at me?"

"Because of your effort Touko-san; me, Senri, Akatsuki and many others all lived..... I'm grateful to you."

Just as Daisuke was about to smile, his gaze suddenly became sharp.

His line of sight caught a glimpse of a woman looking in their direction from a locale that was even further than the members of the Central Headquarters.

The round-sunglasses wearing woman smiled after seeing Daisuke. She then raised one hand; there was a tiny black-colored caterpillar in her hand.

Daisuke's eyes widened.

The woman maintained her smile as she crushed the caterpillar in her palm. Green liquid shed down through the gaps of her fingers, but immediately dissolved into the air along with its corpse.

--- (Oogui)...!

Putting up a grin, the woman disappeared into the dark alley.

Daisuke relaxed his stiffened shoulders and gazed at his tightly clenched left hand.

"As long as we're alive, we're bound to find a solution someday."

*As long as I don't forget this precious feeling.*

*As long as I don't forget this warmth that I'm grabbing tightly onto.*

*I will definitely be able to see Shiika one day ---*

“You’re right.”

Touko’s tone that was filled with laughter came from behind Daisuke; he couldn’t tell what expression that Touko putting up right now.

“We might not know the enemy’s true identity, or even how and what we’re going to fight against in the future. But as long as we are alive, we will definitely find a way to face it!”

“Yeah, we have to live on; our biggest advantage is that we don’t die that easily!”

“The “We” that you just said, Uhh... You’re not including me right...?”

Daisuke smiled weakly as he gazed at his footing.

Within the building where Daisuke and Touko were situated, there was another teenage girl that had vowed to keep on living.

The bright glare of the sun was shining through the gaps of the clouds.

The ray that pierced through the cracks of the clouds shone into a tiny little room.

Within the monotonously-designed room, a pale-faced young man was lying on the sickbed in the middle of the room. The intubation tube which stretched out from his mouth, was connected to a plastic bottle filled with liquid making bubbling sounds.

“Onii-chan.”

A pair of tiny hands was holding onto the hand of the young man that was uncovered by the blanket.

There was blazer-wearing teenage girl standing there; water droplets were dripping onto the floor from her rain-soaked hair.

“I...I-I have something, something that I have always wanted to tell Onii-chan.”

The teenage girl faced the young man, and said with a smile:

“Even though I still can’t say it right now... I’ve decided to work harder, until the day that I am able to say it from the bottom of my heart. I have always been protected by Onii-chan, and by many other people. But from now on, I’ll become stronger --- ... I will fight, and make myself stronger.....”

The hands that were on the young man began to tremble.

“I-I have made a lot of great friends, everyone is very kind, and very strong..... They gave me a lot of things! After Onii-chan wakes up, I’ll tell you all about them! I love everyone; they are all very warm and kind!”

A liquid droplet that was different from water fell onto the blanket.

“This will be the last time I cry... So Onii-chan... You have to work hard..... I’ll be waiting for you...”

The teenage girl showed a bright smile as tears continued to fall.

The young man’s temperature was gradually flowing over through the grasping hands. In order to convey her own warmth, the teenage girl held tightly onto his hands. Through the palms of her hands, she began to perfuse the warmth that she had obtained from her most precious people.

“Can you feel?”

As if it was responding to the teenage girl’s voice.

As if it was responding to the warmth that flowed from her hands.

The hand that the teenage girl was holding onto, seemed to have moved slightly.



Can you feel?

G.H



## Afterword

One night, my cell phone suddenly rang.

Looking at the screen display, it was a number that I had never seen before. I tilted my head thinking as I answered the call... A strong and firm voice came over:

“Excuse me, is this Mr. Iwai Kyohei (Real name).”

“Yes it is.”

“Sorry for the sudden disturbance, I’m from the police department.”

I thought to myself: it finally came.

Good afternoon everyone, Iwai Kyohei here.

To those readers that read my book for the first time, as well as the readers that had been supporting me in the past, thank you all for picking up this book.

Under the help of many people, (Mushi Uta) has finally published its second volume. Probably because there was plenty of time to write this volume, the content and amount was a bit more than the previous one. If everyone is still able to enjoy from this, I would be very happy.

Let’s continue from where I left off before.

The instant when I heard the other party say “I’m from the police department”, three possibilities immediately appeared in my mind:

Possibility one: This is a very bad prank call. The other party used some kind of method to obtain my number to try and steal my information, in which I will be deceived and end up being unfortunate. Bad End.

Possibility two: This is a prank call from a friend, which means a mischief basically, but because of me falling into panic trying to respond, I would end up being laughed at by the other party for at least ten years. Bad End.

Possibility three: It’s really calling from the police, and they will declare that I’ve done a lot of crimes, which I have to go to jail to sentence for. Bad End.

One’s usual behavior is really important! For an instant, I completely thought that I would end up no good.

But I felt it was quite interesting so I didn’t hang up, and continued to deal with him.

The correct answer was: Possibility two.

It was my friend from my high school's club, the last time we contacted was three years ago, and we haven't seen each other for more than six years already.

[The following paragraph is about his high school life, etc. Not really important/and takes time to translate those places so I'll be excluding.]

Aside from those, this year's summer I had also gone to watch the fireworks with my colleague at Odaiba, and tried surfing on a water board with friends back from college on mountain lakes; played quite a lot of things. They told me: "I saw your book!", but just when I was about to thank them, they immediately added "Only read the afterword". How should I put it... Anyway, thank you all.

Because of the encounters of many people in the past, I've become who I am today. Needless to say those that were close to me, those that I had only met once had also constructed a part of me. I hope from now on I would be able to cherish these precious encounters of fate.

The above ending part is quite good; from now on it would be the appreciation.

[He will be thanking staffs members and etc, not really important as well, so go figure =]]

Feedbacks from Staffs:

Wing:

The first thing I wanna say is that, "Thank You" to Skat and Akios for helping me out with the translation. Because of you guys' help, I was able to translate without any worry, (because I know you guys will be there to clean up for me xD sorry for having such thought lol). Nonetheless, I think that my speed had improved quite a bit thanks to you guy. It was always fun to chat with you guys about the upcoming events and stuff, (as well as teasing Akios about what's gonna "happen" next). And even though it was quite a large amount of work, I really enjoyed it and felt happy that we finished it from the bottom of my heart. I was able to learn quite a lot as well, translating this volume definitely helped me on my fan fiction (Currently on the 3.03 chapter, written 19 chapters, around 40k words =D can't wait to release it~). Many thanks to those that helped as well! Especially Sveroz for double checking stuffs for me. Thank you all ~

Well now for the story itself, this 2<sup>nd</sup> volume is one of my favorite volumes. Why you ask, because it's just awesome (idk about the rest of you but it's awesome to me). We finally get to see that one side of Daisuke that we haven't seen before in volume 1. He is no doubt a demon; for the sake of his dream, he

had trampled countless Mushitsuki's dreams, and he knows it very well. That's why whenever he faces Senri, he would have that guilt feeling running around inside him, which is probably also the reason why he couldn't bring himself to see Shiika as Kusuriya Daisuke. He is always alone, always shouldering everything by himself, trudging his legs forward on this long and sad path. No one understand his pains, no one can understand them anyway. This kind of protagonist, do you get to see often in the animes nowadays?

And so, my 2<sup>nd</sup> favorite character in this volume is probably Iori. He is like that kid who always charges ahead in the front, taking the lead. Because of the encounter he had with Senri, he had become a much better person. He had only one dream, and that is to protect Senri, to protect the girl he had fallen in love at first sight. In the end, he fulfilled that dream with a smile. I think I cried a bit when I was reading that part for the first time, (and still teary when reading that part over again). If that scene were ever animated, I would definitely cry a river no joke. His sacrifice would not be forgotten, as well as Azu's, thanks to them, Senri and others were able to move forward. Rest in peace, my friend.

Last but not least, Senri, the new character that had capture quite a few fans (I'm sure lol). To me, she's just like another Shiika, but much sadder version of her. Imouto character, shy yet cute, gets embarrassed easily, and is terrifying when enraged (run xD). Living in a world of darkness ever since she was born; always had to rely on others. No one can possibly understand the things that she had to go through. When I first thought her Mushi was going to mature, my heart ached violently. If she were to turn out to be like Rina, I would definitely cry another river (i'm probably making an ocean by all the tears that I jerked lol) But ya, she lived and I'm happy for that.

The ending brought a smile on my face, a smile of happiness. It's definitely a happier ending than the first volume, and I'm really happy for that. Senri was finally able to move on, Akatsuki lived on with his will (even though it was mainly hatred toward daisuke, he still lived), Touko stopped being so useless, and Daisuke finally gained comrades that could fight by his side. It's no doubt a happy ending, as well as a happy start that would fulfill that promise between Daisuke and Shiika.

PS: (L> Keito, =x)

Akios:

Mushi Uta Volume 2..... Mushi Uta Volume 2..... It was quite an emotional roller coaster. Honestly for me, the rage I felt when Rina died in the first Volume was huge. I have issues with when characters I grow attached to die somber, sad, regretful deaths. I got over it somewhat over time - everyone does - But then the author is quite the jester. When I started reading Volume 2 I thought I was prepared, especially after making it through Volume 1. I was not, however, prepared for the way and number he would kill. Especially Azu and Iori. I wasn't prepared for it. Azu looked like she would survive as well, and then she died. Just like that. What can I say? More than my anger for the author, I felt an undying rage towards Yoichi. The things I thought of for him. The pain I wanted to see him go through. Ironically though, it is because of this that I can keep on reading this. Although to me the author is sick, demented and a complete sadist, he doesn't shy away from the idea, the expectation that the happy ending in a story doesn't always happen. I can hate him for killing off the characters I grow attached to, but the fact he

does do so impresses me and keeps me hooked. This Volume was certainly an eye-opener as well, like the first. The plot twists that the author makes are complicated and all over the place; it keeps things interesting. Still, sometimes while I'm reading I can't help but feel that the author is trolling us in some places. At the least, this one had a happier ending compared to the first... The story itself was just as or more depressing, but the ending for Senri at least, seemed happy. Also, Wing likes to give me 'treats', which involve a happy amount of rage. I can't count the number of times I've cursed because of my ENDLESS rage and.... I hate spoilers. I HATE SPOILERS. And while we're at it, I hate Yoichi too. Yoichi must die. Not become fallen. DIE. Also, Senri, Shiika and Rina FTW.

P.S. Daisuke is a BAMF and you know it.

Skat:

School sucks, nuff said.

Op, op, op, op... Oppa Gangnam style.

[http://ikr.eve-kill.net/?a=pilot\\_detail&plt\\_ext\\_id=92102464](http://ikr.eve-kill.net/?a=pilot_detail&plt_ext_id=92102464)